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Acoustic Archives:
Literary Noise and Soundscapes of Early Modern Spain

DISSERTATION

submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in Spanish

by

Melinda Franke

Dissertation Committee:
Professor Luis F. Avilés, Chair
Associate Professor Santiago Morales-Rivera
Associate Professor Paul Michael Johnson

2025

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DEDICATION

For Dad

"Nobody in your life will ever be a bigger pindy fan than your dad,
not your husband not your mom not your brothers not your kids,
nobody, not even close"

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Acoustic Archives:
Literary Noise and Soundscapes of Early Modern Spain

by

Melinda Franke

Doctor of Philosophy in Spanish

University of California, Irvine, 2025

Professor Luis F. Avilés, Chair

This dissertation explores the role of noise and sound in early modern Spanish literature, a field that has received little attention within the growing discipline of sound studies. I argue that noise functions not merely as background disturbance but as a generative force that shapes narrative form and character development. My approach combines close literary analysis with contemporary theoretical approaches to noise, drawing on Jacques Attali, Greg Hainge, Paul Hegarty, Hillel Schwartz, among others. By tracing how early modern writers conceptualize sonic experience—whether as distraction, release, imagination, or seduction— I situate their works within broader discourses on harmony, subjectivity, and authority.

This study centers on three literary works. In the poetry of Fray Luis de León, noise is cast as *mundanal ruido*, a marker of worldly distraction contrasted with the transcendent harmonies of music and retreat. In Miguel de Cervantes' *Don Quijote*, noise takes center stage in "El episodio de los batanes," where acousmatic sound evokes fear and imaginative projection, generating tension in both the plot and between characters. In Cervantes' *El celoso extremeño*, music is weaponized to infiltrate a fortress of sensory deprivation and

silence, recalling an Orphic force that transgresses boundaries and destabilizes control. These examples illustrate that sound and noise operated as central narrative forces in early modern Spain. By generating scenes, driving plots, and shaping characters, they reveal how literary texts encode tensions, uncertainties, and possibilities through auditory experience. Ultimately, this project demonstrates how literature serves as an acoustic archive, reverberating with the disruptive and generative forces of noise and sound.

INTRODUCTION

Miguel de Cervantes opens the prologue to the first part of *El ingenioso hidalgo don Quijote de la Mancha* by directly addressing his reader and expressing his wish for the novel to be "el más hermoso, el más gallardo y más discreto que pudiera imaginarse" (I:7).[1] Admitting that he cannot defy "al orden de naturaleza," he likens his work to a "hijo seco, avellanado, antojadizo y lleno de pensamientos varios y nunca imaginados de otro alguno"; the product of "el estéril y mal cultivado ingenio mío," as if conceived under the conditions of a prison cell—"donde toda incomodidad tiene su asiento y donde todo *triste ruido hace su habitación*" (I:7, my emphasis). He contrasts this unsettling soundscape with an idyllic *locus amoenus*: "El sosiego, el lugar apacible, la amenidad de los campos, la serenidad de los cielos, el murmurar de las fuentes, la quietud del espíritu son grande parte para que las musas más estériles se muestren fecundas y ofrezcan partos al mundo que le colmen de maravilla y de contento" (I:7).

The "triste ruido" of incarceration is set in opposition to the "sosiego," "lugar apacible," and serene natural sounds that Cervantes associates with fertile artistic production. This contrast illustrates how sound and noise can influence creativity: the prison cell's noise is an agent in shaping—and limiting, according to Cervantes—the artistic process, while gentle, harmonious sounds and tranquil surroundings can inspire even the "musas más estériles" to produce and flourish. Among the thirty uses of the term "ruido" in the novel—five of which occur in Chapter 20 of part I of the novel, "El episodio de los

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[1] All citations of *Don Quijote* are taken from Miguel de Cervantes, *Don Quijote de la Mancha*, ed. Francisco Rico, 2 vols. (Barcelona: Círculo de Lectores, 2004).

batanes"— no other is modified with an adjective like "triste".[2] We might imagine the soundscape of a late-16th century Seville prison:[3] the clanking of chains and shackles, the rattle of keys in heavy locks, the groans of the sick, and the dripping of water in dark corridors. How does this opening acoustic opposition—between the stifling noise of captivity and the generative calm of pastoral quiet—shape our understanding of the work that follows? How might the "triste ruido" resonate in the novel's soundscapes?

The early modern Spanish texts that I examine in this dissertation—the poetry of Fray Luis de León*,* and Cervantes' *Don Quijote* and *El celoso extremeño*—are anything but quiet. Their narratives are filled with and driven by references to melodies and harmonies, the rhythms of the natural world, and human-made clamor and voices. This sets up a central duality: noise, on one hand, is presented as an obstacle to artistic creation (as Cervantes claims); on the other, it is an inextricable, generative element of the fictional and poetic world. The *triste ruido* of Cervantes' prison cell thus is more than an autobiographical detail: it offers a point of departure for examining how noise and sound operate as forces of disruption and creation. It is this dynamic that inspires the dissertation, in which I investigate how such acoustic tensions shape the literary soundscapes of early modern Spain.

---

[2] Among the modifiers for the term *ruido* in *Don Quijote*—the majority of which refer to the loudness, or intensity of the sound or noise—there are: "grande", "gran", and "grandisimo" (I: 20 and 35; II: 21, 46, 53, 63), "temeroso" and "manso" (I: ch. 20), "áspero" (II: 68). The term "ruido" is only used five times in the collection of *Novelas ejemplares:* once each in *Rinconete y Cortadillo, La española inglesa, La ilustre fregona*, *La señora Cornelia,* and *El coloquio de los perros* and twice in *Las dos doncellas.* Never is the particular term used in *El celoso extremeño*.

[3] Mario Socrate writes in his "Lectura comentada del prólogo" that scholars generally agree that this refers to Cervantes' time in a Seville prison in 1597 ("según la opinión casi general de los comentaristas" (Socrate)).

John Cage famously writes in his book, “Silence” in 1937, “Wherever we are what we hear is mostly noise. When we ignore it, it disturbs us. When we listen to it, we find it fascinating” (3). David Hendy, in *Noise: A Human History of Sound and Listening*, draws on Cage’s words and similarly proposes,

> If we open our ears to sounds that are usually dismissed as unmusical or unpleasant, or simply ignored as merely everyday and banal… we start reconnecting with a whole range of human experience that previously passed us by. Instead of worrying about the usual boundaries between noise and music, or cacophony and silence, or speech and song, we need to discover the virtues of breaking them down (ii).

This project is less about approaching how noise and sound are “heard” in literature, and more about how they play a role in literary works. I aim to explore how noise and sound are used to illustrate specific character traits, how they help set up spatial environments in which action or reflection takes place, and how they generate emotional manifestations in specific settings or situations. How do authors construct scenes using sound and noise, and how are they articulated in the creative fictional or poetic process? How might breaking down conventional boundaries between sonic forms, as Hendy suggests, become not only a way of listening but also a critical method for reading literature?

These questions naturally lead into the emergence of “sound studies,” which Jonathan Sterne formally declared as a new field of study in 2012, sparking a groundbreaking interdisciplinary approach to literature, history, music, architecture, and more. Since the release of this seminal anthology, scholars have gravitated to this promising field of research, publishing articles with a declared intention to study sound as

a cultural artifact. Published in 2019, *Spanish Sound Studies* stands as the pioneering collection of articles that explore ways in which sound has been "integral" in the modernization of Spain. However, all the articles in the collection focus on the 18th century and thereon, effectively excluding early modern Spain from both a historical and literary perspective. Only in the past few years has the field expanded to address the early modern period, with projects such as *Music and Power in Early Modern Spain: Harmonic Spheres of Influence* (2022), *The Bulletin of Spanish Studies* issue on sound in poetry titled "Aural Culture and Poetics in the Early Modern Hispanic World: Sound, Rhythm and Music" (2023), and *Soundscapes of the Early Modern Hispanophone and Lusophone Worlds* (2025).

At the heart of the sound studies movement is R. Murray Schafer's influential concept of the soundscape, which he defines as "any acoustic field of study" (7), which "consists in events *heard,* not *seen"* (8, emphasis in original). For Schafer, noises are simply "sounds we have learned to ignore," and instead of resisting them, he urges us to take a positive approach, deciding which sounds we wish to "preserve, encourage, [and] multiply." He also underscores sound's cultural significance: until the Renaissance, for example, God was not depicted visually but conceived as sound or vibration (10). Schafer also emphasizes that hearing is "a special sense," noting that "there are no earlids" (11), a reminder of sound's inescapability. Quoting Richard Wagner— "The eye appeals to the outer man, the ear to the inner" (qtd. in Schafer, 11)—Schafer emphasizes sound's unique capacity to penetrate inwardly, shaping perception in ways that vision cannot.[4]

[4] This is a concept I directly engage with in Chapter 2, where I discuss the dynamics of sound and vulnerability of the listener, drawing on theories of acousmatic sound and Mladen Dolar's *A Voice and Nothing More.*

This project seeks to contribute to the field of "sound studies" by focusing on the early modern Spanish period. In my examination of the prose and poetry of two prominent canonical figures from the period—Fray Luis de León and Miguel de Cervantes—I hone in on noise and sound as complex yet central literary aspects that shape poetry, novel, and short story alike. While broadly investigating the role that noise and sound play in my chosen works, I specifically focus on their relationship to the constructions of subjectivity and how the authors incorporate noise and sound to illustrate specific characters and the contexts in which they live and move. What sorts of effects do noises provoke in different characters, and what kinds of relationships are seen or expressed between these subjects and acoustic elements? How are sound and noise implemented by the author to set up spatial environments and scenes?

Contemporary approaches to sound and noise continue to generate debate and a multitude of definitions dependent on different historical and cultural contexts. In a variety of theoretical frameworks, noise emerges as both problematic and contradictory; as Greg Hainge puts it in *Noise Matters: Towards an Ontology of Noise*, "Timeless and untimely, noise is the noisiest of concepts" (6). Beyond its 'traditional' definition— "unwanted sound" (182), according to Schafer—, noise has been viewed by different theorists as a process: a resistant, avant-garde, and transformative force. Jacques Attali, in *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*, presents a unique approach to noise that I find especially useful in my own reflection on literature. For Attali, noise stands out as an act of rebellion in the face of silence with a particular propensity to transgress and destabilize borders and fixed spaces, "More than colors and forms, it is sounds and their arrangements that fashion societies. With noise is born disorder and its opposite: the world. With music is born power and its

opposite: subversion" (6). On one hand, this approximation is intriguing in the face of Fray Luis' association between noise and urban spaces and his movement to a setting in which noise is rejected. On the other, the relationship between noise and disorder will be particularly illuminating in my study of my third text, a tale of music and subversion, *El celoso extremeño.*

Equally important, however, is the way noise intersects with questions of subjectivity in early modern texts. In both Fray Luis and Cervantes, noise and sound become entangled with the characters' experiences, shaping identity and perception. Fray Luis, in "Oda a la Vida retirada" expresses a transformation of his self through a spatial and acoustic retreat. He expresses a rejection of "mundanal ruido" and his enjoyment of the soundscape of the countryside, through metaphoric and sonic references that describe both a human and individual experience. Chapter XX of the first part of *Don Quijote* presents an interesting interplay of sound and noise in a unique nighttime environment. Cervantes plays with the subjectivity and ambiguity of these terms and the affective responses of the characters: Sancho, on one hand, reacts in a way that furthers his characterization—and ultimately forcing him to trick his *amo* for the first time in the novel—, while Don Quijote sees the noises of the *batanes* as the opportunity for his next adventure.

The three chapters of this dissertation are divided accordingly by text: (1) Fray Luis' "Vida retirada" and "A Francisco de Salinas", (2) Chapter XX of *Don Quijote,* "La aventura de los batanes", and (3) *El celoso extremeño*. Though these three works present a diverse set of literary themes, settings, and characters, they all demonstrate the importance of noise and sound in the creation of literary meaning of the early modern period. Chapter 1, "Revisiting

mundanal ruido: The Poetics of Noise in Fray Luis de León" examines how Fray Luis engages with the concept of noise both as a sonic phenomenon and as a metaphor for worldly distraction. Centered on the phrase "mundanal ruido" from *"*Vida retirada*"*, the chapter examines how the poet juxtaposes the urban and political "noise" with the harmonies of a secluded, natural environment, considering both as interconnected elements in his poetics of retreat. I read "Vida retirada" alongside "A Francisco de Salinas," exploring how both poems articulate a transformation of the self through spatial and acoustic movement, yet in notably different ways. In the former, Fray Luis idealizes a horizontal retreat from the clamor of the city to the quietude of the countryside, where noise and sound are carefully distinguished to cultivate an environment of escape and reflection. In the latter, music becomes the vertical engine of transcendence, propelling the soul toward the "más alta esfera."

Chapter 2, "Noise as Adventure in 'El episodio de los batanes'" turns to Cervantes's *Don Quijote* to explore how noise functions as a narrative catalyst. Drawing on theories of acousmatic sound that frame it as a catalyst for both fear and wonder, I argue that the mysterious noises in Chapter 20 suspends the characters in a liminal space where the source of the sound remains concealed, intensifying its affective power. Yet, the two have notably distinct reactions to these strange noises: they provoke a profound emotional response in Sancho—"que naturalmente era medroso y de poco ánimo"—while Don Quijote, on the contrary, insists on seeking out their source. The chapter thus illustrates how acousmatic sound can operate as both a destabilizing force that incites fear and a generative one that invites imaginative engagement and the promise of adventure. This

chapter argues that Cervantes uses noise as a structuring force that shapes action, reveals character traits, and questions the limits of sensory knowledge.

Chapter 3, "Subversive Noise and Music in El celoso extremeño" examines Cervantes' seventh *novela ejemplar*, where music becomes a disruptive and transformative force within a tightly controlled domestic space. I examine how the story stages sonic infiltration—through Loaysa's seductive singing and instrumental performance—as a challenge to Carrizales's regime of silence and surveillance. In doing so, the narrative mobilizes sound as both a weapon of seduction and an agent of liberation, and Loaysa acts as an Orphic figure that unsettles the boundaries of the *fortaleza*. By reading the musical attack through the lens of Attali's theory of noise as subversion, I argue that *El celoso extremeño* treats sound as a driver of narrative crisis and transformation. This chapter asks how Cervantes's tale of aural transgression complicates our understanding of noise as merely disruptive, revealing instead its capacity to reconfigure space, relationships, and power.

With a particular interest in literary representations of noise, I remain aware that noise cannot be studied detached from accompanying auditory experiences—be it other sounds, expressions of music, or tones of voice. One of Hainge's points regarding noise—that it does not exist independently, yet only in relation to what it is not—reinforces this notion and acts as a reminder to remain conscious of all sonic archetypes and their relationships to one another when we approach literature. Studies of sound must be mindful that authors generally combine their attention to different senses in their writing: be it sight, hearing, touch, etc. As a result, literary criticism should always consider this

mixture, for our senses are interconnected and influence each other. It is just as important to consider what is heard as what *is not,* and, likewise, what is seen and what *is not*. Thus, as might be clear in the selection of these texts, noise and sound will be analyzed alongside other sonic elements such as music and voice, for they, at times, are entangled and indistinguishable. For example, spiritual, metaphorical, and abstract distinctions between noise and music become apparent only when "Vida retirada" is examined in tandem with "A Francisco de Salinas". Similarly, I would argue that music might be pinpointed as the central acoustic element in *El celoso extremeño*, but noise plays an equally interesting role in the conquest of the house, and the numerous interplays between sound, noise, and music in the *novela* are ripe for a renewed reading.

From this premise emerge the central questions guiding my research: How do early modern authors conceive of the relationship between noise, sound, and other sonic forms such as music or voice? Do they treat them as separate, related, or interconnected entities? What differences can we note between different authors' conceptions of these terms or their articulation in the creative fictional or poetic process? How are sound and noise used to set up spatial environments, settings, or scenes, and what might they add to a specific scene that other senses (sight, touch, smell, taste) cannot? How does sound and noise relate to forms of subjectivity, to the construction of the self or being? How do they reveal or reinforce specific character traits? What happens when characters or figures cannot access sonic experiences, as is the case of the women in Felipo Carrizales' house? What are the cultural meanings attached to (un)identifiable or (un)recognizable noises? How does recognition—or its absence—affect interpretation, and what does this reveal about the sensory worlds of early modern Spain? These questions guide my analysis of the chosen

works, informing the central argument of this dissertation: noise and sound in early modern Spanish literature are not merely disruptive forces but dynamic agents that generate complex scenes, innovative plots, and multi-dimensional characterizations.

CHAPTER 1

Revisiting “mundanal ruido”: The Poetics of Noise in Fray Luis de León

The adventures of *Lazarillo de Tormes* begin when young Lázaro leaves home after being placed with his first master, *el ciego*, and the pair depart Salamanca. *El ciego* instructs him to place his ear against a stone bull that they encounter as they cross a bridge on the way out of Salamanca, “Lázaro, llega el oído a este toro, y oirás gran ruido dentro dél” (23). Lázaro blindly obeys and receives a *gran calabazada* that rings in his head for three days afterwards. This blow prompts a moment of internal reflection and learning, his first of many throughout the book, “Paricióme que en aquel instante desperté de la simpleza en que, como niño, dormido estaba” (23). First, we note that a non-identifiable noise has the potential to generate curiosity—a concept I explore in depth in Chapter 2—, and thus works as a trap in the hands of *el ciego*. The *gran ruido* expected by Lázaro is absent, replaced by pain, humiliation, and the harsh truth that language can be used as a tool of deceit and manipulation. It is not merely an auditory expectation but a symbol of naivete and disillusionment, shaping Lázaro’s being within the picaresque world. More broadly, *el ciego’s* violent aural pedagogy demonstrates that noise in literary works can function not just as an auditory marker but as a structuring element of knowledge, authority, and personal transformation.

In early modern Spanish literature, sound and noise function as essential narrative devices for developing plot, expressing emotion, and revealing character treatments. In contrast to the scene in *Lazarillo de Tormes,* where noise becomes a vehicle for deception, Fray Luis approaches sound and noise through a philosophical and contemplative lens.

Two of his most famous poems, “Vida retirada” and “A Francisco de Salinas”, reveal a nuanced engagement with soundscapes: the former emphasizing the retreat from *mundanal ruido*, and the latter celebrating music as a conduit to divine harmony. While Lázaro is violently thrust into an understanding of the world through noise, Fray Luis deliberately distances himself from it to seek clarity and spiritual fulfillment. Noise (or the lack thereof), thus, is intricately tied to personal transformation, whether through a harsh awakening of experience or a cultivated path of introspective retreat.

Fray Luis creates an especially dynamic and acoustic feeling in his poetry, inviting reflection on his treatment and conceptualization of noise and sound. “Vida retirada” articulates the Horatian topic of *Beatus ille,* an expression of joy and praise of rural life. Fray Luis idealizes the retreat to the countryside, a *locus amoenus*, a change that reflects an enhancement of his self through a shift in land- and soundscape. This chapter explores how noise and sound, as represented in the poem, illustrate specific character traits that are highly desirable to Fray Luis and how they set up a spatial environment of escape and reflection. How are specific character traits revealed through the sounds he chooses to foreground or suppress? What sort of noises and sounds are highlighted in this self-transition proposed by Fray Luis’, and what literary techniques does he implement to distinguish between the two? How do both silence and sound help him articulate a sense of spiritual self, and how does this stand in contrast to the disruptive forces and noises associated with urban life?

Fray Luis retreats from what he famously deems “mundanal ruido” to a pristine soundscape comprised of babbling brooks, the song of birds, and the wind whistling

through the trees. One scholar, Ricardo Senabre, has postulated that "mundanal ruido" does not refer to literal sounds—the commotion of the city, for example— and limits the term to its purely metaphorical implications. I would like to revisit this phrase and explore its links to acoustic elements in its larger role in the poem. What does Fray Luis mean by his use of the phrase "mundanal ruido" and its relationship to an urban space? Does Fray Luis provide other textual clues—metaphorical, literal, and sound-related or otherwise—to add to our understanding of this phrase? Finally, what implications does "mundanal ruido" have for our overall understanding of Fray Luis' work?

To address these questions, I read "Vida retirada" in tandem with "A Francisco de Salinas", a supreme expression of music and harmony. In this ode, Fray Luis commemorates Francisco de Salinas, the organist of the Cathedral of Salamanca, and expresses the desire of the soul to ascend, propelled by divine music.[5] While both poems convey self-transformation via spatial and acoustic shifts, it is achieved in notably different ways. In the first poem, the poet's sense of self shifts through a deliberate withdrawal from *mundanal ruido*, while in the second, music acts as an impulse for transcendence. "Vida retirada" implies horizontal movement—from city to countryside—while "a Salinas" poses a vertical ascension—to the "más alta esfera". My exploration of space, sound, and subjectivity thus focuses on how Fray Luis constructs his sense of self through these poetic spaces and soundscapes. What does his act of withdrawing into the countryside signify in terms of personal identity? What role do different forms of sound—noise, music, or

[5] For an in-depth study of Francisco de Salinas, see Amaya García Pérez and Paloma Otaola González, *Francisco de Salinas: Música, teoría y matemática en el Renacimiento*.

silence—play in shaping his subjectivity and self-understanding? Finally, how does the harmony that Fray Luis experiences in listening to Salinas' music compare with the tranquility he finds in "Vida retirada"?

A Theory of Noise

Contemporary approaches to noise continue to arouse debate and a multitude of definitions dependent on different historical and cultural contexts. I would first like to outline several definitions of noise, drawing on the work of Greg Hainge, R. Murray Schafer, Paul Hegarty, David Hendy, and Jacques Attali. As difficult as noise may be to listen to, it proves equally challenging to define; it has gained a reputation for being problematic, and contradictory, "Timeless and untimely, noise is the noisiest of concepts" (Hainge 6). Nonetheless, noise can be productively examined through its relationship to discomfort, disruption, and subjectivity.[6] In doing so, we may, as Hillel Schwartz suggests, "slip out" of the "binary shackles of noise as good or bad" (25).

Greg Hainge, in his seminal work, *Noise Matters: Towards an Ontology of Noise,* traces the origins of sound and noise and maps out a catalog of definitions. At its most basic level, he writes, "noise can be defined as a non-periodic sound … a sound that can be decomposed into a large number of sound waves all of different frequencies that.... are not multiples of one basic frequency and which do not therefore enter into harmonic relations with each other" (3). Beyond a scientific, boxed definition of noise, it is similarly related with a sensation of discomfort; Hainge identifies it as "any auditory sensation which is

[6] Noise as the absence of an intended signal is another idea shared by multiple theorists, which I discuss later in my analysis of "Vida retirada".

disagreeable or uncomfortable" (9). Yet, a feeling of auditory discomfort is largely subjective, as R. Murray Schafer discusses in *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World*. Schafer dedicates a chapter to noise and posits that there are four "most important" traits of noise— (1) unwanted sound, (2) unmusical sound, (3) any loud sound, and (4) a disturbance in any signaling system—but argues that "the matter is more complex than this" (182). He notes that "of the four general definitions, probably the most satisfactory is still 'unwanted sound.' This makes *noise* a subjective term. One man's music may be another man's noise" (183).

In a similar vein, David Hendy, in *Noise: A Human History of Sound and Listening*, offers quite a broad definition of noise, "It encompasses not just music and speech but also echoes, chanting, drumbeats, bells, thunder, gunfire, the noise of crowds, the rumbles of the human body, laughter, silence, eavesdropping, mechanical sounds, noisy neighbors, musical recordings, radio, in fact pretty well anything that makes up the broader world of sound and of listening." (2). Yet, he posits that noise—while not always *necessarily* unwanted or "out of place"—unwanted, inappropriate, interfering, distracting, or irritating—might be thought of as sound that "someone, somewhere doesn't want to be heard" (2-3).

These highly individualized responses to noise partly stem from its cultural associations.[7] Paul Hegarty, in his book *Noise/Music: A History*, echoes noise's ties with disruption and subjectivity, writing, "Noise is an excess, thought of being too much, as for human hearing, this occurs almost entirely through cultural perceptions, and individual

[7] Ultimately, as multiple theorists agree (Hainge, Hegarty, Schafer, John Cage, and Jacques Attali), distinctions between sound and noise are largely subjective, time and/or geography dependent. As Hainge writes, "Distinctions between sound and noise, or noise and music, can only be provisional— they are matters of history and histrionics" (6)

reactions within that framework" (4). One passage in particular, one that I would like to quote at length, is the most revealing about Hegarty's approach to noise:

> It is unwanted, other, not something ordered. It is negatively defined—i.e. by what it is not (acceptable sound, not music, not valid, not a message or meaning), but it is also a negativity. In other words, it does not exist independently, as it exists only in relation to what it is not. In turn, it helps structure and define its opposite (the world of meaning, law, regulation, goodness, beauty, and so on). Noise is something like a process, and whether it creates a result (positive in the form of an avant-garde transformation, negative in the form of social restrictions) or remains process is one of the major issues in how music and noise relate (5).

Hegarty's use of the ambiguous term "ordered" here—to mean both requested and/or organized—reveals a complex dynamic that manifests itself in a variety of ways in the texts examined in this thesis. Judgments about what is deemed "(un)wanted" often expose deeper structures of power and control; such a framing illustrates the ethical dimensions of noise, particularly in its relation to authority, exclusion, and resistance. Indeed, as Hainge and Jacques Attali discuss, "noise" made by the oppressed—though unwanted by those in power—can function as a vital, disruptive expression of dissent. Thus, noise is not strictly limited to the auditory realm, for it can manifest as any form of disruption, signaling a broader disturbance of order or expectation. Some theorists, especially Hainge and Attali, even argue for an ontological understanding of noise—not merely as something unwanted, but as a fundamental force, resisting structure and coherence.

Let's return to noise as a relational, cultural phenomenon. Hegarty quotes Arthur Kroker to elaborate this point, "hearing has always been alchemical, a violent zone where sound waves mutate into a sedimentary layer of cultural meanings, where historical referents secrete into contemporary states of subjectivity, and where there is no stability, only an aural logic of imminent reversibility" (qtd. in Hegarty, 5). To be noise, then, is to be in a perpetual state of flux—"Noise itself constantly dissipates," Hegarty argues, "as what is judged noise at one point is music or meaning at another" (ix). This instability is key: the boundaries of what is considered noise are constantly being redrawn. The phrase "mutate into a sedimentary layer of cultural meanings" is a striking, dynamic image that reveals itself in various literary representations of the early modern period. How does Fray Luis represent noise in its relationship with subjectivity? What types of "individual" reactions occur in the face of noise in his poetry? How do his construction of scenes or soundscapes demonstrate this correlation?

These theoretical frameworks of noise will guide my reading of Fray Luis de León. "Vida retirada" is constructed via a series of binary oppositions and juxtaposition—noise and silence, city and countryside, etc.—to stage noise not merely as unwanted sound, but as a figure of spiritual disorder. In this light, Hegarty's insight that noise is defined relationally and negatively will find particular importance in my analysis. Because Fray Luis constructs his poems in this way—*mundanal ruido* versus its counterpart—it becomes essential to explore not only what he rejects as noise, but also what he elevates as its antithesis. Understanding noise as both disruptive and deeply subjective allows us to appreciate Fray Luis' poetic rejection of *mundanal ruido* not as mere escapism, but as a deliberate act of self-construction. Reading his poetry through these theoretical

frameworks allows the reader to more clearly distinguish between chaotic noise and harmonious soundscapes, which ultimately shape Fray Luis's poetic and philosophical vision.

The Soundscape of Retreat: "Vida retirada"

R. Murray Schafer begins a chapter titled "Silence" with the following:

> In the past there were muted sanctuaries where anyone suffering from sound fatigue could go into retirement for recomposure of the psyche. It might be in the woods, or out on sea, or on a snowy mountainside in winter. One would look up at the stars or the soundless soaring of the birds and be at peace. (253)

This idea of "sound fatigue" and auditory release ties in with the topic of *Beatus Ille*, named for Horace's second epode which reads,

> He loves to lie beneath an ancient ilex tree,
> or deep in grass too lush to leave,
> as all the while the water glides between high banks,
> and birds are moaning in the woods,
> and leaves speak out against the flowing stream,
> and every sound invites to easy sleep.
> (II, vv. 23-28)

"Vida retirada" echoes the sense of pastoral serenity represented here. Just as Horace writes of water gliding, birds moaning, and leaves rustling in ways that "invite to easy sleep," Fray Luis draws upon a similar auditory palette. He includes the rustling of trees,

the gentle stirring of wind, and the harmonious song of birds as central elements of his retreat. These sounds form a kind of natural music that lulls, calms, and spiritually resets the listener.

A different kind of resonance between inner emotion and outer soundscape appears in the pastoral lyricism of Garcilaso de la Vega, whose *Égloga I* exemplifies how nature can reflect and intensify human feeling. The transitional verses between the poem's dedication and Salicio's lament establish a link between his internal suffering and the external landscape:

Saliendo de las ondas encendido,
rayaba de los montes el altura
el sol, cuando Salicio, recostado
al pie d'una alta haya, en la verdura
por donde una agua clara con sonido
atravesaba el fresco y verde prado;
él, con canto acordado
al rumor que sonaba
del agua que pasaba,
se quejaba tan dulce y blandamente,
como si no estuviera de allí ausente
la que de su dolor culpa tenía…
(I, vv. 43-56)

In these lines, the rising sun, the sound of flowing water, and Salicio's murmered lament weave an acoustic and emotional tapestry. The presence of water to reflect the speaker's emotions—"por donde una agua clara con sonido / atravesaba el fresco y verde prado."—; its clarity contrasted sharply with the depth of Salicio's grief. Yet, the ripple and rhythm of the stream align closely with Salicio's own lament, linking external motion with internal unrest. The connection between sound and emotion is most clear in the lines: "él, con canto acordado / al rumor que sonaba / del agua que pasaba." The term *"acordado"* implies both musical harmony and emotional synchronization between Salicio's song and the nearby stream, as though nature itself weeps alongside him. Unlike "Vida retirada," where the soundscape facilitates moral and spiritual elevation, Garcilaso's acoustic setting is not a site of retreat from worldly noise. The *pastores*, a literary convention, live in a pastoral setting and sing in harmony with nature, but do not move there for moral reasons. They do not reject a mundanal ruido; the sounds of nature in *Égloga I* intensify emotional expression rather than offer escape or transcendence. In contrast, Fray Luis frames sound not as an echo of emotional distress but as a path toward peace; his soundscape supports spiritual composure and moral clarity. The poetic voice has turned away from the city not merely for solitude, but for a higher order of living. Both poets, then, engage deeply with the sonic qualities of the natural world, yet they do so toward different ends.

While the depiction of nature forms a key part of early modern Spanish literature, there is no doubt that the tranquility of the countryside has always possessed a strong attraction for all kinds of people throughout history, including literary characters.[8] Fray

[8] Don Quijote is a clear example of this. For example, at the end of Chapter X of the first part of the novel, Don Quijote and Sancho Panza decide to spend the night beside some goatherd huts rather than seek shelter in a

Luis de León, one of the most important poets of his time, has stood out as a paradigmatic example of the representation of nature in his works. “Vida retirada”, his first and probably best-known, falls within the Classical literary topic of the *Beatus ille*, an expression of joy and praise of rural life. This ode has been studied extensively, from every possible angle including its Horatian roots, themes of understanding and overcoming, to the use of maritime imagery (see Rabone, Posada, Connor). In “La «Escondida Senda» de Fray Luis de León”, Ricardo Senabre analyzes the spatial configuration of "Vida retirada", distinguishing between rustic and urban life and emphasizing the importance of the "escondida senda" that Fray Luis follows. The poem begins with the following verses:

Qué descansada vida
la del que huye del mundanal ruido,
y sigue la escondida
senda, por donde han ido
los pocos sabios que en el mundo han sido
(I, vv. 1-5)

Of special interest to the present study, Senabre focuses on what he considers the famous “mundanal ruido”. According to him, it does not encompass the material sounds of the city, “no es el tráfico de la ciudad, ni la pompa y estruendo de los grandes de la tierra, ni los

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village. For Quijote, sleeping “al cielo descubierto” constitutes a virtuous act of knightly affirmation—“un acto posesivo que facilitaba la prueba de su caballería” (I, 10:167). As a *caballero andante,* Don Quijote needs to be outside in the space of adventure, looking for “prueba de su caballería”. Sancho, on the other hand, concerns himself with sleeping and eating at ease. The distinction between village and “cielo descubierto” is a literary technique of condensing the qualities of characters into specific spaces, revealing various aspects of their self. In fact, the division between the countryside and the village—between comfort and the need for adventure—is a driving force of the narration of the book.

devaneos y diversiones de la gente de tronío y vivir loco: todo esto lo tiene ya a la espalda y renunciado desde su juventud" (13). In other words, Senabre seems to agree that the poetic *yo* has already evolved away from the *mundanal ruido*; an issue that I discuss near the end of the chapter when I compare "Vida retirada" and "A Francisco de Salinas." Senabre limits the term to its purely metaphorical implications, in particular, Fray Luis' conflicts and rivalries with colleagues at the University of Salamanca and his problems with the Inquisition, which resulted in years of imprisonment.[9] Thus, the poet's retreat is not physical but symbolic, a rejection of real, human controversy and conflict in favor of a meditative space that is structured around the features of an idealized landscape.[10]

Drawing on Hegarty's theory of noise, we are reminded that noise is both subjectively "unwanted", and negatively defined, "it does not exist independently, as it exists only in relation to what it is not" (5). This is clearly set up in the way that Fray Luis uses the technique of the antithesis and carries it throughout the poem, starting with the first stanza: *la descansada vida* contrasted with *mundanal ruido.* Additionally, noise as

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[9] While it is unclear if "Vida retirada" is published before or after the time of imprisonment (Senabre argues for the latter), it should be noted that Fray Luis was investigated by the Inquisition and was imprisoned between 1572-1576 (Lera).

[10] Senabre takes his analysis a step further to argue that Fray Luis' poetic retreat in "Vida retirada" should be interpreted not merely as pastoral withdrawal, but as a mystical movement—a longing for the divine characterized by the metaphorical ascent toward union with God. I believe Fray Luis is not a mystic. Unlike San Juan de la Cruz, whose poetry emerges from a place of experiential union with the divine, Fray Luis approaches the divine through the lens of reasoned inquiry and theological reflection. Fray Luis wants to understand; while San Juan wants to be. As Cristóbal Cuevas notes in his introduction of this edition, "Los conocimientos teológicos, en cuanto profundizaban en lo divino, no excluían las *litterae humaniores*, sino que las exigían como base y complemento. Solo los místicos pueden conocer a Dios en sí mismo. Los demás, sean filósofos, poetas o teólogas, han de atisbarlo a través de reflexión y estudio" (*Obras Completas,* 11). Fray Luis, then, should be read not as a mystic, but as a learned theologian whose poetry is grounded in intellectual contemplation rather than mystical experience. D. Gareth Walters, in his article, "On the Structure, Imagery, and Significance of 'Vida Retirada'" too argues against this part of Senabre's anaylsis, writing, "Despite the impressive array of supporting theological writing, Senabre's interpretation does not adequately account for such crucial aspects as the sensual description of the *locus amoenus* in the twelfth strophe or the blissful conclusion of the poem with its emphasis on physical well-being" (80).

subjectivity is also revealed in the first stanza, for there are *few* who have taken this "secret" path: "los *pocos* sabios"*.* This signals a key element of Fray Luis' experience: it is a *personal* and *exclusive* journey.

This subjective withdrawal is made explicit later in the poem in the line "Vivir quiero conmigo": a declaration of interiority and self-recovery. The desire to live *a solas* and *libre de amor* stands in contrast to the shepherds in Garcilaso, whose pastoral world depends on companionship and who are not free from love. Unlike those shepherds, who suffer in the presence or absence of the beloved, Fray Luis's speaker seeks a solitude that is not loneliness but wholeness, a turning inward to reclaim oneself. The movement toward the *descansada vida* is, ultimately, a return to the self. Fray Luis rejects the noisy distractions associated with urban living and trades them for *his* ideal soundscape found at his *huerto* "del monte en la ladera".[11] By considering these metaphors within the broader theory of noise as relational and subjective, we might gain a richer understanding of Fray Luis' poetic conceptualization of noise.

In addition, the term "mundanal" itself indicates the possibility of a broader interpretation. *Autoridades* equates *mundanal* with the term *mundano*, which is defined first as "Cosa del mundo, o que toca y pertenece a él," but also as "Se llama también el

[11] There has been much scholarly discussion about the 'true' meaning of Fray Luis' *huerto*. Senabre, for one, sees the "huerto" not as a literal retreat but as a metaphorical, stylized *locus amoenus*—a space aligned with biblical and ascetic traditions, representing a spiritual state rather than a physical location. Isabel Uría Maqua agrees with Senabre to an extent, arguing that the *huerto* represents the poetry Fray Luis wrote in his youth, symbolizing the "springtime" of his literary career, "El huerto es una metáfora de la creación poética: representa las poesías que fray Luis escribió en su juventud, en su primavera de poeta.". Richard Rabone, on the other hand, argues that the "huerto" should not be reduced to a mere biblical allusion (e.g., hortus conclusus) or autobiographical reference (La Flecha), but understood as embodying a Horatian model of moderation and ethical sufficiency, "Fray Luis is following the familiar practice of Horace. What remains is to be more precise about the nature of this metaphorical significance in the Salamancan's poem" (207).

sugeto que atiende demasiadamente, y se emplea en las cosas del mundo" (II, 630). This second definition is meaningful, as it refers not merely to worldly things themselves, but to individuals who devote themselves excessively ("demasiadamente") to such matters—those overly absorbed in the affairs of the world. Here, the ethical and spiritual critiques embedded in the term *mundanal* seem to be highlighted, characterizing not only the nature of what is worldly but also the disposition of those who excessively *atienden* to such things. One of the most relevant definitions of *atender* in *Autoridades* reads: "poner todo el estudio y desvelo en mirar, ò en entender lo que à sí ò à otros conviene" (I, 463-464), in other words, to apply oneself with care and diligence to whatever is perceived as advantageous. In this light, the *mundano* refers to not simply someone who exists in the world, but one who places too much value in it, often at the expense of higher or spiritual pursuits.

In a similar vein, Sebastián de Covarrubias' second definition of *mundo* reads, "el trato de aquellos que atienden sólo a las cosas temporales, y a estos llamamos Mundanos. Algunas veces mundo, significa la instabilidad de las cosas, y la mudanza dellas, y de los estados… Echarse al mundo, salir a tratar con gentes, el retirado… Dejar el mundo, entrar en religión" (558). This entry links the term explicitly to a kind of worldly engagement, particularly, the attention given exclusively to temporal affairs. Covarrubias contrasts an active, outward-facing lifestyle with that of *el retirado*—the one who has withdrawn from such dealings. In this context, *el retirado* becomes a figure of contemplation and detachment, someone who opts out of public life and its instability in favor of a more inward or spiritual path. The phrase *echarse al mundo*, constrasted with *dejar el mundo*, *entrar en religion*, underscore the ethical and existential stakes of one's orientation toward the world. These expressions highlight a tension between worldly involvement and

spiritual withdrawal, which resonates with Fray Luis's own poetic retreat from the *mundanal ruido*.

Fray Luis, put simply, wants to suppress *all* that he deems as "noisy"—the disagreeable, unwanted, and contaminating— in his retreat to the countryside. As if he were privy to information theory, Fray Luis declares to limit this extra information that "muddies" his signal. He explicitly categorizes the objects or concepts that he considers as "noise", contrasting them with a list of sensory features that form part of the soundscape of the "descansada vida". To offer an abbreviated account of what Fray Luis considers as noise, we might list: urban life, pride, vanity, material things ('dorado techo'; oro), flattery ('lengua lisonjera'), confusion ('enturbiar'), fame (fama, 'nombre pregonera'), deception ('condena la verdad sincera'), jealousy, hatred, and anger. Fray Luis opposes these undesirable virtues with the following: the rustic and rural life, closeness to God, solitude ('vivir quiero conmigo'), sleep (sueño no rompido), peace and happiness ('un día puro, alegre, libre'), and the various sounds of nature ('cantar sabroso de las aves'), etc.

Verses 6 through 14 read,

Que no le enturbia el pecho
de los soberbios grandes el estado,
ni del dorado techo
se admira, fabricado
del sabio moro, en jaspes sustentado.

No cura si la Fama
canta con voz su nombre pregonera,

ni cura si encarama

la lengua lisonjera

lo que condena la verdad sincera.

(I, vv. 6-15)

The verb *enturbiar* here means "to confuse", or "to cloud," or "muddy" in the context of water, "Turbar, confundir y obscurecer la claridad de alguna cosa. Dícese con propriedad de las águas" (II, 526). A disturbance of the heart's clarity, *enturbiar* aligns with one of the central dimensions of noise: as disruption and distortion of meaning. For example, Jacques Attali argues that noise is "a resonance that interferes with the audition of a message in the process of emission" (26).[12] This definition inherently implies the existence of an intended signal that is disrupted in some manner. In this sense, the absence of a clear signal from the receiver end is a direct consequence of noise interfering with its transmission. This idea is critical when reading Fray Luis, for the poetic *yo* cannot find what he needs within the *mundanal ruido*. The noisy world, it would seem, is more powerful than the capacity of the subject to live a good and moral life within it. The poem implicitly postulates that one world must be abandoned, because the conditions that prevail in it are impossible to navigate or overcome. Retreat is not framed as a personal weakness, but as a necessary strategy in the face of an overwhelming environment of distortion and noise.

[12] Attali continues, anticipating Hegarty's ideas, "Noise, then, does not exist in itself, but only in relation to the system within which it is inscribed: emitter, transmitter, receiver. Information theory uses the concept of noise (or rather, metonymy) in a more general way: noise is the term for a signal that interferes with the reception of a message by a receiver, even if the interfering signal itself has a meaning for that receiver. Long before it was given this theoretical expression, noise had always been experienced as destruction, disorder, dirt, pollution, an aggression against the code-structuring messages" (26-27).

Just as noise muddies an intended signal, the allure of wealth and status "enturbian" the inner state, obstructing clarity of thought and deeper self-awareness. The imagery of muddied water will be later contrasted in the poem by a calming, flowing, bubbling brook, a symbol of the soul's return to harmony. This opposition is further emphasized by this stanza's rejection of political power (*los soberbios grandes el estado*) and aesthetic glory (*el dorado techo… en jaspes sustentado*). These symbols of worldly authority are not neutral; they risk overwhelming the self and drowning it in a kind of perceptual and moral static. By asserting that the virtuous person remains unclouded—*no le enturbia el pecho*—Fray Luis articulates a poetics of retreat grounded in the rejection of noise in its most metaphysical sense: the refusal of distraction, confusion, and worldly distortion.

In verses 11 through 15 (*no cura si la Fama…*), Fray Luis offers a clear rejection of public life, particularly through the treatment of the figure *Fama* and its acoustic associations. As I discuss further in Chapter 2, the concepts of fame, noise, and sound are intimately connected. There, the relationship between noise and fame in the chivalric ethos—where fame is loudly sought and proclaimed, —contrasts starkly with Fray Luis' perspective. While Quijote pursues *Fama* as a marker of heroic identity, Fray Luis treats it as a form of acoustic pollution: one that distorts inner truth and undermines the quietude of contemplative life. These verses contrast the speaker's desired spiritual clarity with the disorienting, noisy seductions of fame and praise. To begin, *Fama*, when capitalized, nods to a personification, likely to the mythological figure in classical literature often depicted as a powerful female figure who spreads news, truth, lies, or rumors. There is an inherent duality to *Fama*: she is both a bearer of truth and a generator of distortion. She is also often represented with two trumpets, which symbolize good and bad reputation (see Figure 1).

In Virgil's *Aeneid*, *Fama* is described as a monstrous creature with many eyes, mouths, and tongues, and sowing rumors and half-truths by night (see Figure 2).[13] Fray Luis draws on this classical imagery and uses *Fama* to stand for the tempting or potentially chaotic nature of public renown. This personified force, in the eyes of Fray Luis—regardless of the fact if they are spreading good or bad news— can be seen as a symbolic figure who shouts, announces, and disturbs. As Luis Avilés writes,

> La fama no es únicamente el ruido que un cuerpo puede producir por sí mismo, sino la capacidad fonográfica (grabar o escribir el sonido) que posee la escritura cuando reproduce ese ruido en forma de texto. De esta manera, la fama puede divulgarse transformada en ruido, en acto estridente, hecho infame, lo que sería el 'caso lamentable' que produce el yo y que el poeta amenaza con divulgar en sus versos (443).

Thus, fame can be contradictory. The more fame he gains as a poet, the more readers will read him. For morality to be effective, the poet needs readers, needs to be known, as long as he shows *humilitas*.

[13] A monstrous phantom, horrible and vast./ As many plumes as raise her lofty flight, / So many piercing eyes enlarge her sight; / Millions of opening mouths to Fame belong, / And ev'ry mouth is furnish'd with a tongue, / And round with list'ning ears the flying plague is hung. / She fills the peaceful universe with cries; … And spreads thro' trembling crowds disastrous news; / With court informers haunts, and royal spies; Things done relates, not done she feigns, and mingles truth with lies (IV, vv. 173–188). Similarly, In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, "Rumour" is represented as a goddess who lives in a house on a mountain summit, constantly echoing and filled with a gossiping crowd.

Figure 1. Solis, Virgil. "Fama". Reproduced in Carla Roth, *The Talk of the Town: Reputation and Rumour in Early Modern Zurich*, Oxford University Press, 2023, p. 116.

Figure 2. Brant, Sebastian. *"Fama".* Reproduced in Carla Roth, *The Talk of the Town: Reputation and Rumour in Early Modern Zurich*, Oxford University Press, 2023, p. 115.

Here, Fray Luis emphasizes how insidious and powerful the lure of public recognition can be; it speaks loudly (*con voz pregonera*) yet, for him, it offers only noise, not truth.[14] Yet, one might gloss over a key term in the full line, for *Fama* does not speak, but rather, it *sings* (*canta) con voz pregonera*. D. Gareth Walters, in his article "On the Structure, Imagery, and Significance of 'Vida Retirada'" points out this detail, arguing that the use of the verb *cantar*, contrasted with la voz pregonera, is an example of Fray Luis' use of irony in the poem.[15] Thus, Fray Luis subverts the usual association of singing with harmony or beauty; in this case, the song is not uplifting but an ironic distortion of music that masks deception as praise. *Pregonero*, in the noun form, is defined as "el oficial público que en alta voz da los pregones, y publica y hace notorio lo que se quiere hacer saber, y que venga a noticia de todos. Es oficio muy vil y baxo" (III, 354). The *pregonero*, then, is a loud, public figure that makes the news known to all. The use of this adjective frames it as embodiment of noise: blaring and potentially uninvited. For Fray Luis, this public voice becomes a pollution of the self, one that distorts and devalues interior truth. Also crucial is the fact that those who reject the *mundanal ruido* simply do not care—*no cura*—about fame. It is

[14] Carla Roth, in *The Talk of the Town: Reputation and Rumour in Early Modern Zurich*, makes a distinction between the early modern concept of *fama* and modern conceptions of the term *rumor*. In the early modern period, *fama* referred broadly to what was said about someone—whether true or not—including reputation, public opinion, fame, and general tidings. Unlike today's concern with factual accuracy, *fama* described a prevalent form of communication rooted in communal discourse. Roth writes, "One's *fama* (here meaning reputation) could be bad or damaged, but more often *fama* was public, common or commonly known, constant, and consistent. These adjectives indicate that *fama* drew its power from the many voices which carried it forth and repeated it, as well as from the wide publicity it thereby received" (113).

[15] Throughout his article, Walters sketches out what he calls "indicators of the positive mode" of the poetic yo. Music and song, of course, would fall under that categorization, as well as the "'cantar sabroso no aprendido' of the birds to the sweet sounds of the gently-plucked strings at the end" (76). For his discussion of the irony present in verses 46-50, see page 75 of his article. He also argues for the ironic and contradictory use of the term "sustentado" in "Vida retirada", and "A Francisco de Salinas".

indifference, rather than direct opposition, that defines the attitude of the one who seeks *la escondida senda*. Fame and flattery are rendered irrelevant and unworthy of concern.

This rejection of fame is compounded in the next lines: *"ni cura si encarama / la lengua lisonjera / lo que condena la verdad sincera"* (vv. 12–14). The *lengua lisonjera*[16] adds a contrasting register to this acoustic field: not the shouting *pregonero*, but the soft, seductive whisper of praise of the *adulador*. This duality of sound—loud and hushed—reinforces the pervasiveness of noise. Flattery doesn't need to be deafening to be disruptive; it corrodes from within, twisting sincerity (*verdad sincera*) through sweetened words. In both cases, truth is threatened and undermined by noise.

This representation of *Fama* as a noisy, external force connects with broader cultural discourses of fame as an auditory marker. R. Murray Schafer traces the historical presence of the post horn, an auditory symbol of the arrival of news (*The Soundscape,* 47).[17] The horn and the *pregonero*, then, in the eyes of Fray Luis, become emblematic of noise as an instrument of fame, glory, and existential disorientation. The horn, like the *pregonero*, is an instrument of exposure: it reveals the private achievement, whether or not the subject desires it. For Fray Luis, it is absolutely rejected as *ruido*: an imposed sound that threatens the integrity of interior life. Whether shouted by the *pregonero*, whispered via flattery, or

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[16] 'Lisonjear' is defined as, "Alabar, engrandecer y ensalzar los méritos, obras o palabras de otro, engañosamente, con fingida estimación, y obsequiosa vileza" (II, 415).

[17] Schafer notes that "Cervantes himself mentions them", potentially referring to chapter 34 of the second part of *Don Quijote*, where the characters are startled by a cacophony of warlike instruments, including horns, drums, trumpets, and clarinets. This is followed by the arrival of a demonic *postillón* sounding "un hueco y desmesurado cuerno, que un ronco y espantoso son despedía", accompanied "con voz horrísona y desenfadada" (II: 818).

announced by a post horn, *Fama* represents the very type of auditory, worldly distraction from which the poet longs to withdraw.

This withdrawal, however, is not merely a retreat from noise but a conscious rejection of public life and recognition. The subject of the poem's beginning stanzas—*"el que huye del mundanal ruido"*— is the one who turns away from fame and worldly entanglements by choosing another path: *"la escondida senda."* The term *escondida* underscores a desire for privacy and seclusion, a life shielded from the external gaze. Fray Luis's rejection of *Fama* is, therefore, a critique of the public spectacle, opting instead for a hidden life where inner harmony is preserved.

The poem continues,

¿Qué presta a mi contento,
si soy del vano dedo señalado;
si en busca deste viento
ando desalentado
con ansias vivas, con mortal cuidado?

¡Oh monte, oh fuente, oh río,!
¡Oh secreto seguro, deleitoso!
Roto casi el navío,
a vuestro almo reposo
huyo de aqueste mar tempestuoso.

(I, vv. 16-25)

These verses deepen the poem's opposition between inner peace and *mundanal ruido* by highlighting the exhaustion and futility that result from chasing reputation or social validation. The image of being "del vano dedo señalado" evokes a superficial gaze: fame reduced to a mere gesture. Pursuing such hollow recognition, the speaker finds himself in search of "deste viento". Noise and wind share an intimate connection. Luis Avilés, in his article "*No al concertado son, sino al ruido*: la acústica ruidosa en la 'Canción desesperada'" highlights the material aspect of noise and its connection to a sense of collision or conflict, drawing from Covarrubias' definition of *ruido* as "el estrépito que se hace, a ruendo, porque es propio sonido de la cosa que se cae o el que hace el viento, y entonces sería nombre hebreo *rua, ventus* (qtd. in Aviles, 434). He links this to Aristotle's theory of sound as something that always occurs from contact—"producido por algo, contra algo y en algo."[18] Avilés concludes that *ruido* can be concieved as,

> una intensificación sonora producida por dos cuerpos sólidos y materialmente constituidos que van a mantener una relación de contacto o contigüidad el uno con el otro. El estrépito de la cosa que se cae como resultado de un accidente es causado por el contacto de un objeto con la solidez del suelo, o la manera en que el viento azota los árboles o el estruendo producido por una tormenta (434).

In this framework, noise is not just auditory but also physical: the product of impact, disruption, or rupture between solid bodies or with the air.

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[18] "'El sonido en acto es siempre producido por algo, contra algo y en algo', puesto que para que haya sonido es necesario que 'objetos duros se golpeen mutuamente y golpeen el aire" (qtd. in Aviles, 434).

In “Vida retirada”, the pursuit of *“deste viento”* becomes a pursuit of noise in this material, disorienting sense: a chaotic force that unsettles the body and spirit. Per the definition offered in Autoridades, *viento* can mean “vanidad, y jactancia" (III, 483). Wind, then, is not natural background but a symbol of turmoil; the pursuit of “deste viento” signals a loss of stability and direction. He who seeks it is “desalentado,” demoralized,[19] and driven by “ansias vivas” and “mortal cuidado”: anxieties that arise from exposure to worldly demands. There may even be is a comparison here between *viento* and the emotional turmoil caused by a storm at sea. Noise, here, is conceived as both literal sound and existential crisis, a disorientating pressure that blows one off course.

As Walters notes, strophe 5 provides “abrupt and repeated changes from the scene of rural peace to that of danger and turbulence” (73). This change dramatically arrives with the exclamation: “¡Oh monte, oh fuente, oh río!”. Here, the poet calls upon the silent solidity of the mountain, the gentle continuity of the spring, and the steady flow of the river. This stands in contrast to the storm at sea, which is why he later describes himself as arriving “roto casi el navío,” reinforcing the comparison between the viento and a shipwreck. These natural elements form a sonic environment that is soothing, stable, and in stark contrast to the metaphorical, disruptive wind. Where “deste viento” evokes noise and internal battle, the mountain and river offer a welcomed balance of rhythm and stillness.

Fray Luis rejects these noisy distractions and exchanges them for the atmosphere of his huerto “del monte en la ladera”. Along with the rivers, flowers, and the breeze that

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[19] Desalentar is defined as “Desanimar o dificultar el aliento por excessivo trabajo, fatíga y cansáncio” and “Metaphoricamente vale disminuir el ánimo, el valor, esfuerzo o aliento” (II, 98).

whistles through the trees[20]—yet another airy contrast to the *viento*—, Fray Luis describes the soundscape of a *locus amoenus*:

Despiértenme las aves
con su cantar sabroso no aprendido;[21]
no los cuidados graves
de que es siempre seguido
el que al ajeno arbitrio está atenido

Vivir quiero conmigo,[22]
gozar quiero del bien que debo al cielo,
a solas, sin testigo,
libre de amor, de celo,
de odio, de esperanzas, de recelo

(I, vv. 31-40)

The only sound that interrupts the "no rompido sueño" are the natural, non-artificial songs of the birds. Schafer begins a chapter of his book, "The Sounds of Life", with a section titled "Bird-Song". It is no coincidence that this comes first, for argues Schafer, "no sound in

[20] See verses 48- 55, "desde la cumbre airosa / una fontana pura / hasta llegar corriendo se apresura. // Y luego, sosegada, / el paso entre los árboles torciendo, / el suelo de pasada / de verdura vistiendo / y con diversas flores va esparciendo."

[21] As Uría Maqua notes, this phrasing is influenced by Garcilaso's v. 64 to 69 of *Égloga II*, "Convida a un dulce sueño / aquel manso rüido / del agua que la clara fuente envía, / y las aves sin dueño, / con canto no aprendido, / hinchen el aire de dulce armonía.

[22] Rabone highlights that this sentiment does not only refer to solitude, but also reflects a Stoic rejection of worldly ambition, writing *"'Vivir quiero conmigo'... recalls the Stoic commitment to scorn externals, living instead the interior life"* (p. 210).

nature has attached itself so affectionately to the human imagination as bird vocalizations", claiming that listeners around the world identify bird-song as one of or the most "pleasant sounds in their environment" (29). Garcilaso too uses the song of birds to construct the peaceful soundscape of his Canción III, which I'll discuss shortly.

In contrast, the term "grave" (*no los cuidados graves*…) is striking, which has seven relevant definitions in *Autoridades.* Among them, these four seem to have a special—and spatial—meaning in the context of the poem: (1) "Lo que es pesado, compuesto de partes sólidas, y por su naturaleza se inclina a baxar o caer"; (2) "Significa algunas veces altivo, entonado y vano, que se dedigna de ir o tratar con otro, por parecerle más humilde y de baxa esperha"; (3) "Se toma también por molesto y enfadoso";[23] (4) "Se llama en la Música el son hueco, baxo y profundo" (II, 77). Here, Fray Luis contrasts the sweet song of the birds with something of an opposite nature, that which is heavy that tends to "bajar o caer".[24] For the first definition, it is no coincidence that *pesado* has a double meaning, "Vale tambien molesto, enfadoso, o impertinente" (III, 241). Covarrubias offers this definiton of "pesar", "Por alusión... es tristeza y cuidado, que carga el espíritu y le aflige, como cogiéndole debajo". Both definitions reinforce the connection between noise and weight—not just physical heaviness, but an emotional and spiritual one that burdens the soul. Noise is a force that drags the spirit downward, burdening inner harmony and clarity.

[23] Words like "enfadoso" or "molesto" have a clear tie to noise in their relationship with nausea, "Causar asco o hastío alguna cosa, por no recibirla bien el estómago, o por su mal olor, que parece quiere provocar a vómito." I discuss the potential connection between the term "noise" and the latin terms *nausea, naus,* or *noxia* in my section devoted to "Oda a Salinas"

[24] We recall Covarrubias' defintion of ruido, "…es propio sonido de la cosa que se cae o el que hace el viento" (*Tesoro*).

The second definition of *grave* introduces a new layer of contrast: Fray Luis's dismissal of material vanity in favor of humility. Later in the poem, he writes:

Ténganse su tesoro
los que de un flaco leño se confían;
no es mío ver el lloro
de los que desconfían
cuando el cierzo y el ábrego porfían.
....
A mí una pobrecilla
mesa, de amable paz bien abastada
me baste; y la vajilla
de fino oro labrada
sea de quien la mar no teme airada.
(I, vv. 61- 65, 71-75)

Here, Fray Luis rejects this "falso leño", trading it for a more stable and modest wood form, "A mí una pobrecilla / mesa de amable paz bien abastada / me basta…" (vv. 71-73). This image juxtaposition—between the fragile ship and the secure table—marks a clear preference for spiritual and ethical stability over the pursuit of grandeur. As Richard Rabone argues in "Horatian Roots in Fray Luis's Garden: Imagery and Meaning in the 'Vida Retirada'", the "pobrecilla mesa" should not be read as a symbol of deprivation but rather of moral integrity, "Here, the poverty of the 'pobrecilla mesa' does not imply that it is bare;

rather, it may well derive from the poverty linked with virtue in Ode 3.29" (210). Fray Luis' minimalism, then, is not denial but an embrace of virtue through simplicity.

Jumping to the fourth definition of "grave": the negative acoustic quality of this musical note—deep and hollow—is especially striking. It evokes the sonority of a tolling church bell, which, when set against the bright, spontaneous birdsong that opens this stanza, creates a clear phonetic and symbolic antithesis. This stanza (Despiértenme las aves / con su cantar sabroso no aprendido / no los cuidados graves / de que es siempre seguido / el que al ajeno arbitrio está atenido) dramatizes the opposition between natural, relaxing sounds and the oppressive, *pesado* weight of "cuidado"[25]. This antithesis extends to the subsequent lines (Vivir quiero conmigo, / gozar quiero del bien que debo al cielo, / a solas, sin testigo, / libre de amor, de celo, / de odio, de esperanzas, de recelo), where Fray Luis articulates a desire to live alone. Here, Fray Luis frames freedom as not only as release from emotional turmoil—"libre de amor, de celo, / de odio, de esperanzas, de recelo"—but also from external surveillance or a sense of performativity. Noise, then, is associated with a kind of existential heaviness or gravitational pull, while solitude and silence mark the conditions for authentic, unencumbered being.

Finally, Fray Luis alludes to the total absence of sound with the phrase "sin testigo." Covarrubias's definition of "testigo" includes the proverb "Los testigos matan al hombre, porque conforme a lo alegado por las partes, y probado con los testigos juzga el juez la causa" (II, 43), offering a commentary on the power and danger of testimony in the form of

[25] Cuidado is defined as, "Solicitúd y adverténcia para hacer algúna cosa con la perfección debida" and "Es assimismo la atención y el cargo de lo que está a la obligación de cada uno, en que debe desvelarse, porque de salir mal, se le ha de echar la culpa, o le puede venir daño" (I, 363).

spoken word. A *testigo* is someone who gives testimony to something ("el hombre o la muger que haze fe, y da testimonio de alguna cosa"), but when it is false (*testigo falso*), it becomes a grave offense. Sound, then, can play a crucial role in a man's fate, that of which can rest entirely on the word of another. In this context, the line "a solas, sin testigo" gains deeper resonance: to be "sin testigo" is not only to evade legal judgment,[26] but to escape the broader frameworks of social scrutiny and the (moral) gaze of others. In other words, fame always needs witnesses; it needs the voice of others in order to expand spatially the name of a person. Fray Luis' poetic voice does not want, nor need, *testigos*.

As we near the end of the poem, the references to the auditory continue:

El aire del huerto orea[27]

y ofrece mil olores al sentido;

los árboles menea

con un manso ruïdo

que del oro y del cetro pone olvido.

(I, vv. 51-60)

The first verb used here, *orear*, implies a sensation of wind, but a mild one that "refreshes", just as *menear* describes a peaceful swooshing of the trees (II, 540). This sweet sounding, tranquil breeze allows for him to forget material concerns, contrasted with the

[26] Nowhere did *testimonio* carry greater weight than in the Inquisition, so perhaps this is a reference to Fray Luis's own experience with it.

[27] Richard Rabone, in his article "Horatian Roots in Fray Luis's Garden: Imagery and Meaning in the 'Vida Retirada'", argues that the "huerto" and the "sea" are not merely contrasting images of retreat and turmoil but form a dynamic symbolic opposition central to the poem's moral message. Rabone writes: "These two images, of the restful garden with the table and the shade it contains on the one hand, and the stormy sea and its travellers... stand in tension, and dominate the poem until its close" (p. 205).

previous imagery of wind as disruptive and disorientating. The phrase “manso ruido” is a clear and well-identified reference to Garcilaso’s Canción III,[28] which constructs a similar dynamic feeling,

Con un manso rüido

d’agua corriente y clara

cerca el Danubio una isla que pudiera

ser lugar escogido

para que descansara

quien, como estó yo agora, no estuviera:

…

hacen los ruiseñores

renovar el placer o la tristura

con sus blandas querellas,

que nunca, día ni noche, cesan dellas.

(vv. 1- 13)[29]

[28] It is well known that Fray Luis read Garcilaso de la Vega in his childhood and this author had a great influence on his works.

[29] Covarrubias defines murmullo as, “el ruido manso que hace el agua corriente, á murmure, por la figura onomatopeya. Y de alli murmurar, que es decir mal de alguno, medio entre dientes: y murmurador y murmuración” (559). Here, the pleasing sound of babbling brook is contrasted with speaking bad of another. Schafer discusses onomatopoeia, arguing that it “mirrors the soundscape” (40). He focuses on the written and spoken descriptions of the sounds of animals, such as the *bark* of a dog, or the *yelp* of a puppy. He concludes, “In onomatopoeic vocabulary, man united himself with the soundscape about him, echoing back its elements…. But the soundscape is far too complex for human speech to duplicate, and so it is in music alone that man finds that true harmony of the inner and outer world. It will be in music too that he will create his most perfect models of the ideal soundscape of his imagination” (42)

While the sound of flowing water, complemented by the "blandas querellas" of the *ruiseñores*, recalls the acoustic calm of "Vida retirada", the mention of *tristura* introduces a key difference. In Fray Luis, there is no such melancholia, rather, the speaker expresses spiritual contentment and detachment from loss. He is satisfied with what he has and does not long for what he has left behind. In contrast, Garcilaso's landscape is shaped by emotional ambivalence, where nature both soothes and intensifies a grief rooted in love. The speaker's transformation—*"como estó yo agora, no estuviera…"*[30]—is not simply a product of the tranquil setting, but also a consequence of love's emotional aftermath, a theme absent in Fray Luis. The birdsong—*"que nunca, día ni noche, cesan dellas"*— creates a continuous acoustic backdrop that echoes the speaker's inner unrest. While both poets use sound to frame a shift in consciousness, their emotional undercurrents differ.

Taken together, the examined references to sound and corresponding rejections of noise in its many forms represent concrete examples of the transformation of Fray Luis' self. His retreat into nature is not passive but an act of active listening: a recalibration of the self in response to a newly attuned soundscape. The attunement to the sounds of nature is partly due to his displacement from a lo-fi system to a hi-fi one, which has implications for his overall impressions and descriptions of the sounds and noises of the two opposing soundscapes. Schafer writes, in his chapter titled "The Rural Soundscape", "A hi-fi system is one possessing a favorable signal-to-noise ratio. The country is generally more hi-fi than

[30] The first verses of Canción V also include a reference to wind, "Si de mi baja lira / Tanto pudiese el son / que en un momento / Aplacase la ira / Del animoso viento, / Y la furia del mar y el movimiento" (vv. 1-5). Of course, such desire to calm the storm is different from Fray Luis. Garcilaso wants to calm the storm within the storm with the healing power of poetry, while Fray Luis believes that one cannot live within the storm, a space too powerful for the subject to control. That is why the subject needs to retire, *retirarse*, to find an alternate world.

the city; night more than day; ancient times more than modern" (43). Although his chosen environment is "generally more hi-fi",[31] it is not Fray Luis' mere *presence* in such a system that allows him to enjoy a positive signal-to-noise ratio, but, rather, his *active identification* and *elimination* of the noises that are disruptive to his being. Though I have not yet concluded my analysis of "Vida retirada", I find it useful to pivot to discuss "A Francisco de Salinas" so that the two poems can be analyzed in tandem, where appropriate.

Music as Transcendence: "A Francisco de Salinas"

The celebrated "A Francisco de Salinas" stands out as a supreme expression of music and harmony. In this famous ode, the poet commemorates the blind organist of the Cathedral of Salamanca and expresses the desire of the human soul to leave the earthly realm and ascend towards the divine. Deeply rooted in Neoplatonic thought, the poem uses music as a metaphor for cosmic harmony.[32] This tradition can be traced back to the figure of Apollo and his lyre, "designed to create soft, lyrical consonances in imitation of cosmic harmony" (Neubauer 22).[33] The opening lines of the poem read:

[31] Schafer defines Hi-fi, "Abbreviation for hi fidelity, that is, a favorable signal-to-noise ratio. The most general use for the term is electroacoustics. Applied to soundscape studies a hi-fi environment is one in which sounds may be heard clearly without crowding or masking" (272)

[32] In other words, as García Castillo puts it, "La música constituye la escala que permite al hombre ascender hasta la más alta esfera, para oír allí una música no perecedera, que es el origen de toda la armonía" (79).

[33] John Neubauer, in his book *The Emancipation of Music from Language*, discusses music and harmony, quoting Plato, "because more than anything else rhythm and harmony [in music] find their way to the inmost soul and takes strongest hold upon it, bringing with them and imparting grace, if one is rightly trained" (ctd. in Nuebauer 23). He also notes, a shift in Plato's philosophy: while Plato initially believed that music could "reveal the harmony of immutable forms and ideas", he later grew wary of music's potential to become disconnected from meaning, "separation and wanton abuse of words, rhythm, and melody" led Plato to see music not as intrinsically harmonious, but as a potentially corruptible social instrument (24). For this reason, Plato ultimately insisted that music should always be accompanied by words, for language serves to preserve its ethical and intellectual function.

El aire se serena

y viste de hermosura y luz no usada,

Salinas, cuando suena

la música estremada,

por vuestra sabia mano gobernada.

(III, vv. 1-5)

While air and wind are a key motif in both "Vida retirada" and "A Salinas", they work in notably different ways in the two poems. As previously discussed, there is a close connection between the concepts of wind and noise; in the first ode, Fray Luis laments chasing "deste viento" as a proponent of *mundanal ruido*, distraction, and disorientation. In contrast, air is represented in the lines above as a medium of transcendence and serenity. Covarrubias defines the adjective form "sereno" as, "el aire alterado de la prima noche[34], con algún vapor que se ha levantado de la tierra. Fre[n]te serena la del señor, cuando no muestra en ella alteración ninguna, ni de alegría, ni enojo. Serenar el tiempo arrasar y quedar el cielo sin nubes ni viento" (27).

A few things are at work here: first, there is an inherent feeling of ascension in the image of a rising vapor, contrasted with the sense of heaviness seen in the term *grave* or *ruido*.[35] The phrase *"el aire se serena"* initiates a poetic atmosphere of calm, signaling both a literal stilling of the environment and a metaphorical clarification of the soul. Crucially, it is the music that causes this serenity: the air is calmed *because* of the music. In this sense, it

[34] Las primeras horas de la noche, según el *Diccionario de americanismos:* https://www.asale.org/damer/primanoche

[35] Cuevas too notes in his annotations that "aire" here also refers to "cielo", quoting another similar line of Fray Luis, "do está mas *sereno* / *el aire* me coloca" (qtd. in Cuevas, 21, emphasis in original).

is as if sound and air are governed by the hand of Salinas. Next, there is a connection between serenity and the imagery of a *"frente serena"* with emotional clarity ("no muestra en ella alteración ninguna, ni de alegría, ni enojo"). The stanza ends with a reference to the weather, connecting it to the absence of wind and clouds: a clearing of both physical and metaphorical noise.

A few stanzas later, air is reenforced as a medium of a transcendence,

Traspasa el aire todo
hasta llegar a la más alta esfera,
y oye allí otro modo
de no perecedera
música, que es la fuente y la primera.
(III, vv. 16-20)

From the first stanza through the fourth, the *alma* is the subject: it is the soul that traverses the air. This air—cleansed and ordered by music—is not an obstacle but a passage to the divine. This contrasts starkly with the *viento* and *mar tempestuoso* of "Vida retirada," where the soul is adrift and battered, pulled off course. There, *viento* represents confusion and instability. Here, *aire* is harmonized, light, and aligned with divine order. While both *viento* and *aire* refer to (moving) air, Fray Luis clearly distinguishes their poetic functions. *Viento* is linked to disorder and loss of control; *aire*, by contrast, is rendered delicate, serene, and receptive to the divine resonance of music. In "A Salinas," the atmosphere is reimagined not as a source of chaos but as a sanctified acoustic space in which soul and sound are united in spiritual ascent.

The final line of this stanza, “música, que es la fuente y la primera”, reminds us that *“*Oda a Salinas*”* is deeply influenced by Neoplatonic thought. Neoplatonic philosophy in the Renaissance—especially as developed by Marsilio Ficino—held that music played a crucial role in elevating the soul toward divine contemplation. Fray Luis, a scholar and poet immersed in both classical and theological traditions, engages with this philosophical framework to present music not merely as an artistic experience, but as a metaphysical force that restores the soul’s lost connection with the divine. The phrase *“la fuente y la primera”* positions music not just as a human experience, but as an origin point and channel to a higher order.

As Cristóbal Cuevas notes in a footnote to the first stanza of the poem, Neoplatonism has close ties with nature and harmony, “La estrofa inicial… encierra en si… la emoción de que cree asistir a esa re-Creación del origen del mundo que la música ha producido o contemplar el espectáculo de la naturaleza rebautizado en su original perfección tras el fin de los tiempos” (qtd in Cuevas, 21). Similarly, Pablo García Castillo, in his article “La armonía en Fray Luis de León”, emphasizes this connection:

> …lo mismo que los pintores mezclan los colores más adecuados para reproducir la armonía natural, los poetas han de buscar las palabras más apropiadas para producir en el alma del que escucha la más dulce armonía, que no será sino espejo de la naturaleza. A este empeño obedece esa constante búsqueda de los sonidos y las palabras que producen una vibración armoniosa en el alma (67).

In the context of "Oda a Salinas," there is no doubt that Salinas' music produces a “vibración armoniosa en el alma” awakening not just the senses but the soul itself—

though this experience is reserved for those attuned to the *bien divino*.[36] As Cuevas notes, the poem privileges sound over sight,[37] "Fray Luis escribe una oda que omite todo lo visual y pondera lo acústico" (22). By foregrounding sound and using harmony as the vehicle for divine ascent, Fray Luis offers one of early modern Spanish literature's most profound meditations on the metaphysical power of music.

The transcendent journey is structured by the classical division of music into three levels: (i) *mundana* (cosmic harmony), (ii) *humana* (the harmony of the soul) and (iii) *instrumental* (human-made music) (see Figure 3, Cuevas 21).[38] Indeed, Salinas's music guides Fray Luis on a spiritual ascent through the three levels, beginning with instrumental (at the bottom):

(i) donde "oye allí otro modo de no perecedera música."

(ii) el alma, "que en olvido está sumida, torna a cobrar el tino…" se levanta "hasta llegar a la más alta esfera) …

(iii) "música, que es la fuente y la primera"[39]

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[36] See the final verses of the poem, "¡Oh, suene de contino, / Salinas, vuestro son en mis oídos, / por quien al bien divino / despiertan los sentidos / quedando a lo demás amortecidos!" (vv. 46-50)

[37] As Cuevas argues, this is partly due to the fact that Salinas lost his vision at 10 years old (21).

[38] See Cuevas' footnote to lines 1-10 on pg. 21 for a detailed description of the three types of music.

[39] See verses 7-8 and 17-20.

Figure 3. "Lady Music and the Three Categories of Music." *Florence, Plut. 29. I, Title-Page*. Photo after Bess. *University of Notre Dame*, https://www3.nd.edu/~ablachly/MUS20101/20101PortraitsBFrame.html [40]

The "son sagrado" played by Salinas is painted by Fray Luis as an echo of a celestial harmony:

Y como está compuesta

de números concordes, luego envía

consonante respuesta;

[40] The painting shows "lady music" to the left, and Boethius's three divisions of music to the right: *musica instrumentalis* (bottom), *musica humana* (middle), and *musica mundana* (top).

y entrambas a porfía

se mezcla una dulcísima armonía.

(III, vv. 26-30)

Susan Byrne, in her enlightening article “La armonía neoplatónica en ‘A Francisco De Salinas’ de Fray Luis De León” identifies three central points of connection between Fray Luis de León and Ficino’s Neoplatonic philosophy: (1) the origin of the soul, (2) its essential harmony, and (3) the role of Apollo as a divine mediator. The soul, in Ficinian thought, occupies an intermediary position between the material and the divine, much like music itself, which bridges the earthly and celestial realms.

Notably, Fray Luis expresses his poetic self as a ship that transcends/navigates spaces in both “Vida retirada” and “A Salinas”. According to Susan Hill Connor in her article, “Maritime Imagery in the Poetry of Fray Luis de León”, nautical references occur in half of Fray Luis' odes, and they stand out as a profoundly important metaphor, “The sea serves as a functional metaphor for mankind's worldly, temporal existence as well for man's spiritual condition in earthly life. The ocean metaphor thus encompasses in conceptual duality both man's moral behavior within society and his intimate religious faith" (38). Fray Luis’ self-image as a ship links "Vida retirada" and "A Salinas," though the vessel in each poem navigates vastly different waters. Let’s compare the two scenes that contain references to a ship and sailing. In "A Salinas:"

Aquí la alma navega

por un mar de dulzura, y finalmente

en él ansí se anega

que ningún accidente

estraño y peregrino oye o siente.

¡Oh, desmayo dichoso!

¡Oh, muerte que das vida! ¡Oh, dulce olvido!

(III, vv. 31-37)

The maritime imagery in the first lines reinforces the soul's gentle arrival and surrender to the divine. Salinas' music activates a metaphysical recollection that frees the soul from the body's prison—albeit temporarily—, allowing for a moment of exaltation that is expressed through a series of interjections. Connor puts it very appropriately, "the soul, as if floating in a sea of serenity and calmness, allows itself to be submerged or drowned ('se anega') in a death-like state of annihilation and sweet oblivion of all exterior reality" (42). This *dulce olvido*, a spiritual drowning in harmony, is the forgetting of worldly concerns. This notion resonates with Fray Luis' earlier portrayal of retreat in *Vida retirada*, linking both poems through their shared vision of inner transformation achieved through movement.

This tranquil arrival is contrasted sharply with the verses found in "Vida retirada":

¡Oh monte, oh fuente, oh río!

¡Oh, secreto seguro, deleitoso!

Roto casi el navío,

a vuestro almo reposo

huyo de aqueste mar tempestuoso.

(I, vv. 16-25)

In this stanza, Fray Luis presents himself as a ship nearly wrecked, desperately fleeing the dangerous waters.[41] This *mar tempestuoso* becomes an acoustic space of turmoil, against which Fray Luis seeks refuge in the "reposo" of the natural world, escaping the spiritual and existential agitation associated with *mundanal ruido*.[42] The very structure of the verses reflects the contrast between the two poems: in "A Salinas", the exclamations come at the end of the journey; in "Vida retirada", they precede it. One might say that, at the end of the two nautical journeys, Fray Luis expresses two opposite experiences: *finding himself* in a separate world and *getting lost* in sacred ecstasy in another. In both cases, a fulfillment of self is expressed, but one is provoked by a desire to flee a world, and the other is a celebration of a religious experience.

This interpretation is supported by the etymological connection between "noise" and *nausea* (from Latin *nausea*, derived from *naus*, or ship),[43] "Noise, like seasickness, can be a disorienting and thoroughly unpleasant sensation, and one that results from dynamic movements over which one has little control" (Johnson 391). Paul Michael Johnson, in his article ""Sounds of Fury: The Aural Poetics of the Voice and Imperial Violence in Cervantes' Mediterranean" offers this description of noise as a rather stupefying force

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[41] In terms of sound, Fray Luis represents another maritime danger in his Ode IX, "Las serenas", which deals with the song of the sirens, mythological creatures whose enchanting voices lured sailors to shipwreck.

[42] Connor contextualizes the maritime imagery used by Fray Luis within Catholicism. Religion acts as the support—the vessel—that carries the believer through their journey. However, if their faith fails or they commit a sin, their self may venture off course, resulting in a spiritual *náufrago* (38). While I do not dive into this, Fray Luis' religious background is to be noted. Cuevas proposes that Christian humanists conceived spiritual life as a call to both religion and the literary, a love of both god and letters. These two paths were a path to perfection capable of saving man,"También éstas eran, al fin y al cabo, un camino de perfección capaz do salvar al hombre, y el *vagar* que exigían se asemejaba al ocio contemplativo. Armonizadas así en el alma del agustino sus dos grandes vocaciones, la entrega «a los estudios nobles» se realizaba con gozo y diligencia. (11)

[43] R. Murray Schafer, on the other hand, outwardly rejects this notion, though he does not provide a specific reason for it (*The Soundscape*, 182).

following a violent battle at sea*:* "No sé si del ruido de la batalla o del vapor que arrojó de sí la tierra empapada en la sangre de los contrarios, me han dado unos váguidos de cabeza, que verdaderamente me tienen como tonto, y no acierto a escribir cosa que sea de gusto ni de provecho" (qtd. by Johnson, 391). The speaker is unsure whether the condition is caused by the noise of the battle (an auditory effect) or by the vapor rising from blood-soaked sand (an olfactory one). Despite this, the speaker considers noise as a cause of his condition. This blend of noise and nausea evokes the "mar tempestuoso" from which Fray Luis seeks refuge—a sea of confusion and spiritual peril.

Johnson's reminder that sound is a dynamic force—a concept that I explore in depth in Chapter 2— prompts a mention of Aristotle's reflection on the connection between music and the soul. Drawing on both Aristotle's *Poetics* and *Problems*, Antonio Martín Moreno, in his article, "Música, pasión y razón: La Teoría de los afectos en el teatro y la música del siglo del oro", explores the connection between sound, movement, and *ethos*. He cites the question-and-response proposed by Aristotle in *Problems 27* and *29*,

> ¿Por qué los ritmos y las melodías, que no son otra cosa, no obstante, que sonido, guardan relación de semejanza con las cualidades morales, mientras los sabores no, ni tampoco los colores y los olores? ¿No será porque son movimientos como lo son también las acciones? La actividad tiene ya, por sí misma, carácter ético y produce *ethos*, mientras los sabores y los colores no hacen otro tanto (qtd. in Martin Moreno, 332).

Aristotle distinguishes sound, and thus, rhythms and melodies, from other sensory experiences because they are inherently dynamic. Movement becomes the bridge linking it

to *ethos* and emotion; just as actions are dynamic and have ethical value, so does sound. As Martin Moreno argues, "el movimiento viene a ser el puente que conecta de forma indirecta sonido y *ethos*," establishing an affinity between (musical) sounds and emotions—*"miedo, piedad, valor, etc."* Thus, movement is the shared foundation of both music and ethical activity, which enables music its profound affective power. The transformative power of music is a concept that I explore much more in depth in Chapter 3. Some examples of this in classical mythology include the chant of Orpheus, said to have a civilizing power in Classical times and beyond; or the song of the Sirens, whose haunting melodies lured sailors to their deaths.

Ramón Andrés, in *El mundo en el oído: El nacimiento de la música en la cultura*, offers a related exploration, writing, "Para los antiguos, la recepción de los sonidos implicaba… una interpretación del devenir, puesto que el sonido es duración".[44] In other words, sound was seen as a way to perceive and interpret change and the passage of time. Since sound unfolds over time (unlike a visual image, which is grasped all at once), listening was associated with understanding movement, transformation, and temporality—key elements of existence and "becoming." In addition, Andrés writes that if the ear corresponds to one of the eight parts that compose the soul,[45] then it is uniquely capable of " «escuchar» esa voz que procede de los dioses, es decir, del mundo invisible. De esta suerte, la música

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[44] See Antonio Martín Moreno, *"Música, pasión y razón: La Teoría de los afectos en el teatro y la música del siglo del oro",* for an in-depth discussion of the longstanding tension between music as spiritual liberation and as a tool for ethical and intellectual discipline.

[45] It is unclear what source Andrés is drawing on when he makes this connection, but he provides many images that represent this relation between hearing and the soul (Figure 4). Andrés writes, in reference to these images, "los sentidos se asimilaban a determinados elementos: la vista correspondia al fuego y el tacto a la tierra; sin embargo, el oído se emparentaba con el éter, esto es, el esapcio, el Cielo" (55).

podría aceptarse como una transcripción o translación de lo que está oculto" (Figure 4, 86-87).[46] This idea of music as a revelatory force is further emphasized in his overarching assertion that sound can be seen as a force that shapes perception and meaning: "el sonido no llena el espacio: lo crea" (54).

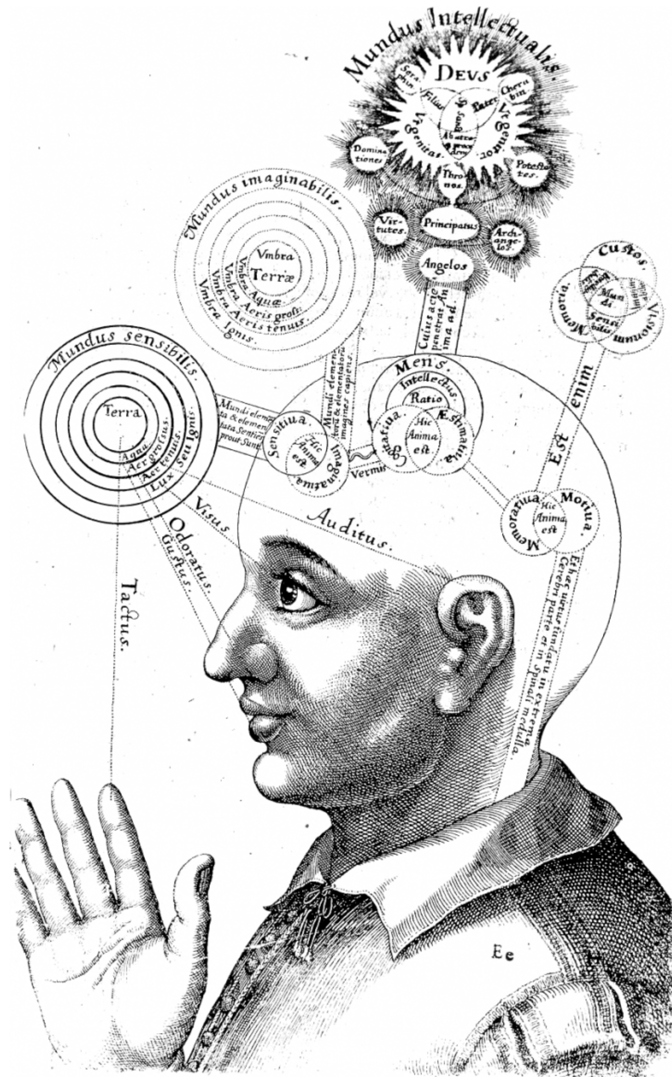

Figure 4. Robert Fludd, *Utriusque cosmi*, II (Edición de 1619). From Ramon Andrés, *El mundo en el oído: El nacimiento de la música en la cultura.* Pg 55.

[46] Andres draws on Epicurus to argue that the ear is not merely a passive receptor of sound but an active agent that orders and gives shape to the flow of aural impressions, just as the eye absorbs and organizes tangible matter" (87), a notion that I refute and argue against in Chapter 2.

These reflections on the dynamic and spatial dimensions of sound resonate deeply with Fray Luis de León's treatment of music and auditory perception in both "Vida retirada" and "Oda a Salinas". Just as Aristotle links sound to *ethos* through movement, and Andrés describes music as a force that creates space and reveals hidden truths, Fray Luis crafts his poetic universe around the transformational power of harmonious sound. In "A Salinas", the "son divino" restructures the soul, recalls it to its divine origin, and reorders its moral and spiritual orientation.

Listening, in Fray Luis' terms, is an active and ethical mode of being. The *aire sereno* formed by Salinas's music becomes, in Andrés's terms, not merely a vessel but a space shaped by sound itself—an acoustic sanctuary where the soul awakens. Conversely, the intrusion of *mundanal ruido* in "Vida retirada" symbolizes distraction, interruption, and fragmentation. Harmony and noise, in Fray Luis' writings, are positioned as two ends of the sonic spectrum: while the former brings recollection and restoration, the latter threatens and unravels just that. In this way, Aristotle's and Andrés's frameworks illuminate Fray Luis's philosophy of listening: music is both medium and message, a force that organizes internal and external worlds. Through sound, the poems dramatize a journey of self-recognition and ethical recalibration. It is through sound that the soul remembers, reclaims, and reorients itself toward the divine.

Fray Luis describes a spatial and acoustic environment that serves as a space for reflection and reencounter with God, expressed in the conclusion of "Vida retirada":

Y mientras miserable-

mente se están los otros abrazando

con sed insacïable

del peligroso mando,

tendido yo a la sombra esté cantando.

A la sombra tendido,

de hiedra y lauro eterno coronado,

puesto el atento oído

al son dulce, acordado,

del plectro sabiamente meneado.

(I, vv. 76-85)

These two concluding stanzas reflect the final contrast between Fray Luis and those who have not been able to follow the *escondida senda*. While others are distracted by *mundanal ruido*, Fray Luis possesses the clarity to hear a *son dulce, acordado* played by a great musician. But who might that musician be? God himself. The phrase *"*puesto el atento oído*"* highlights Fray Luis' attentive, focused act of listening. After his spiritual journey, Fray Luis is finally able to be delight in his solitude and sings in harmony with the "plectro sabiamente meneado."

The final two stanzas of "A Salinas" expresses a paradox: the joy of divine immersion accompanied by an awareness of the limitations of earthly perception:

¡Oh, desmayo dichoso!

¡Oh, muerte que das vida!

¡Oh, dulce olvido!

¡Durase en tu reposo,

sin ser restituido

jamás a aqueste bajo y vil sentido!

(III, vv. 36-40)

Here, Fray Luis expresses a desire for a permanent state of transcendence, resisting the inevitable return to the bodily senses. This longing for *dulce olvido*—a blissful forgetfulness of the physical world—mirrors Ficino's notion that the soul, once awakened by music, yearns to remain in a purified state of divine awareness. This experience is also expressed in the final verses of the poem:

¡Oh, suene de contino,

Salinas, vuestro son en mis oídos,

por quien al bien divino

despiertan los sentidos

quedando a lo demás amortecidos!

(III, vv. 46-50)

Fray Luis's signal-to-noise ratio approaches its maximum in the culmination of the poem. While "están los otros abrazando / con sed insacïable / del peligroso mando", Fray Luis listens closely to the "sweet, accorded" sound of the plucking of an instrument, be it a lyre or another apparatus. As Charles Hirshkind notes in the "Religion" section of the *Keywords in Sound* collection*,* the use of auditory metaphors to elaborate concepts of transcendence, divinity, or cosmology form part of a long historical and cultural tradition. He writes, "Humankind's enmeshment in the illusion of material reality prevented it from hearing the celestial harmonies. Only with the *gradual attuning of the soul* … could humans

once again achieve the refinement of the ear necessary to hear and participate in the universal song of creation" (167, my emphasis). The verb “attune” has two meanings—both to “make aware” or “to make harmonious”—an action that fittingly describes Fray Luis' auditory experience through his retreat to the “Vida retirada”. Through the rejection of noise and the (at)tuning of ear and soul, he is able to hear and appreciate the music of God, the ultimate antithesis of “mundanal ruido”.

However, his expression of freedom in "Vida retirada" cannot be compared with the awakening of the divine senses that he expresses at the end of the “Oda a Salinas”. To better understand this, we might turn to the scholarly discussion regarding the issue of movement and temporality in the first poem. While Senabre, for example, argues that the poetic *yo* has already evolved, Walters differs in opinion. He sustains that the ode should not be read as the affirmation of a man who has attained spiritual peace, but rather as an *aspirational* voice of one who *longs* for it. Citing Fray Luis's grammatical choices—particularly the third-person construction in the opening line (“el que huye…”) and the subjunctive mood in the penultimate stanza of the poem (“tendido yo a la sombra esté cantando”)—Walters insists that the poem “incorporates… an element of yearning as much as, if not more than, achievement” (78). For him, “the poetic voice of the latter part of the poem is not that of a sage who has arrived at a desired state of being, but of someone who seeks to reach it” (122). He further suggests that “*Vida retirada* does not partake of… a triumphant assertion,” and that “there is an uneasy awareness of the dark side” (78).

I am drawn to Walter's argument that the poet incorporates an “element of yearning” that is perhaps equal to—or even more prominent than—a feeling of triumph.

Yet I would argue that Fray Luis's withdrawal from *mundanal ruido* is not portrayed as a goal yet to be achieved, but as a state already attained. The poetic voice is not in the process of discovering this peace, for he already inhabits it. His departure from the world of noise has already initiated a moral and spiritual transformation. Still, as Walters warns, *Vida retirada* should not be read as a "self-congratulatory eulogy of ideal conduct" (78), but as a poetic form of yearning redirected outward. That longing is displaced onto the reader: it is the reader who must desire the *descansada vida*, who must seek a path away from the *mundanal ruido*. In this sense, the poem is an invitation, and one that points toward the reader's own potential transformation. If *Vida retirada* carries longing, it is not for what the speaker lacks, but for what the reader has yet to desire, or seek. The movement away from noise marks an interior transformation that has already taken place within the speaker. It is now the reader, still immersed in noise, who is in need of that same transformation.

In short, "Vida retirada" implies horizontal motion with the *possibility* of vertical motion, or a displacement of the self that opens the possibility for something greater, an opportunity to be closer to God.[47] Thus, these two poems imply two different transformations; in fact, it seems to me that if one were to take the two poems as a single entity—read "Vida retirada" and "A Salinas" consecutively—the last stanza of "Vida retirada" would function as a perfect starting point for another *viaje* that he will take in "A Salinas."

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[47] Senabre develops this question in his analysis by citing Fray Luis's *Declaración del Libro de los Cantares*, arguing that the *escondida senda* functions as a spiritual path leading toward God ("La escondida senda", 17). Walters, in contrast, interprets the phrase as a reflection of the difficulty in achieving such spiritual clarity. As he puts it, "The attitude is that of one who also knows that it is not easy to locate it; it is an 'escondida senda'" (78). For Walters, the path is not a serene route already discovered, but an elusive goal: something longed for, but not easily attained.

Fray Luis de León, in his two most celebrated odes, articulates a vision of the self shaped through spatial and acoustic movement. While each poem traces a path of transformation, they differ in both direction and mode. In "Vida retirada", the motion is horizontal—a contemplative retreat along a hidden path that brings peace and simplicity, but not necessarily transcendence. The poet seeks alignment with nature, not elevation beyond it. In contrast, "A Salinas" stages a vertical ascent: here, music acts as the engine of spiritual uplift, guiding the soul toward the "más alta esfera." One poem proposes a *displacement* of one's self, while the other describes a *transported* self. Despite the differences in directionality between the two poems, there is no doubt that the two express a subjective, emotional, and exclusive transformation.

Conclusion: Noise and Sound as Architects of Self

R. Murray Schafer reflects,

> Just as man requires time for sleep to refresh and renew his life energies, so too he requires quiet periods to regain mental and spiritual composure. At one time stillness was a precious article in an unwritten code of human rights. Man held reservoirs of stillness in his life to restore the spiritual metabolism. Even in the hearts of cities there were the dark, still vaults of churches and libraries… Outside the throb of the cities, the countryside was accessible with its lulling whirr of natural sounds… The importance of these quiet groves and times far transcended the particular purposes to which they were put. We can comprehend this clearly only now that we have lost them (254).[48]

[48] Hillel Schwartz discusses how civilization, urbanization, and industrialization are historically contradictory in terms of noise, framed as simultaneously suppressing and amplifying it in different ways. 'Civilization', on

With these words, Schafer captures the essence of what Fray Luis de León seeks in "Vida retirada": an acoustic and spiritual refuge from *mundanal ruido*. Though he lived in 16th-century Spain, Fray Luis lived amid plenty of "urban" noise: courtly culture, academic rivalries, public pressure, and inquisitorial scrutiny. This was not mere background sound, but a disorienting force that shaped thought and identity. In his poetry, noise becomes a condition of subjectivity. His retreat from *mundanal ruido* is not escapism, but a deliberate act of reorientation and a recuperation of the self: toward stillness, clarity, and the moral harmony found in the countryside.

Throughout this chapter, I have argued that Fray Luis uses sound—and, equally if not more important, the rejection of noise— as frameworks of transformation. In "Vida retirada", he names *mundanal ruido* as a pollutant that clouds the soul's perception and the capacity to construct a moral life. This noise is social, political, and emotional. It comes in the form of Fama's blaring song, flattering whispers, and restless chase after grandeur typical of courtly society. In contrast, the countryside and its hi-fi soundscape (in Schafer's terms) offer an alternative: manso *ruido*, the harmonious babbling of brooks, the rustle of trees, and the singing of birds. These natural, restorative sounds reattune the speaker's senses, allowing for clarity, reflection and divine proximity. To flee *mundanal ruido* is to shed the distortions of public life and attune oneself to a truer moral frequency.

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the one hand, can be seen as a refining force, one that "rises above savage drumming and barbarian wailing to produce elegant music, poetry, and discourse" (21). Similarly, the mass production and distribution of goods makes it easier to obtain products without having to venture outside, "*Or*, industrialization and mass advertisement shatter the tranquility of the countryside, the silence of the skies, the quiet of kitchen and parlor, and the health and hearing of the worker at the stove, in the office, in the field, or at the factory" (Schwartz 21-22).

In my theoretical framework, I drew from contemporary definitions of noise to illuminate how Fray Luis's *ruido* is not simply unwanted sound, but a relational and subjective category. While Paul Hegarty describes noise as "unwanted, other, not something ordered, a negativity that exists only in relation to what it is not" (5), Greg Hainge emphasizes its function as discomfort, as a non-harmonic force that resists coherence, and David Hendy defines it as "sound that someone, somewhere doesn't want to be heard" (iii). These definitions converge in Fray Luis's depiction of *mundanal ruido*: not merely city sounds, but an auditory symbol of pride, ambition, and distraction. Fray Luis doesn't just flee noise, he defines himself through the act of rejection of it.

In *Oda a Salinas*, the soundscape shifts. The spacial transformation is not horizontal, but vertical, and music elevates the soul through ordered harmony, lifting it toward the "más alta esfera." If "Vida retirada" stages the retreat into self, "A Salinas" performs the soul's elevation: a vertical movement toward the "más alta esfera." Music does not merely replace or drown out noise; it restores meaning, invoking Ficino's Neoplatonic vision of harmony as a bridge between the human and the divine. Ultimately, Fray Luis's withdrawal from noise is not a retreat into silence but a movement toward attunement. Just as Schafer suggests that "stillness was a precious article in an unwritten code of human rights," Fray Luis treats rejection of noise and attunement to music as a sacred right, perhaps even a sacred duty. By leaving behind the *mundanal ruido*, he enters a space where he can hear again: not the world's din, but the measured, ordered music of divine creation.

CHAPTER TWO

Noise as Adventure in "El episodio de los batanes"

Variety, uncertainty, not seeing everything, and therefore being able to wander in one's imagination through things unseen, all contribute to [this] pleasure.
-Giacomo Leopardi, *Zibaldone*

As drops of rain fall into some dark well,
And from below comes a scarce audible sound,
So fall our thoughts into the dark…
And their mysterious echo reaches us.
-Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, *The Spanish Student*

While all acquainted with the adventures of *Don Quijote de la Mancha* are familiar with Don Quijote's iconic manipulation of his visual world in his quest as a knight-errant, one would be remiss to not also argue a distortion of his auditory environment. In fact, a reader need not look further than the second chapter of the first part of the novel to find evidence of a Quixotic modification of sound. His first ever *salida* finds him at the entrance of an inn, perceived to be a prominent castle complete with four soaring towers and an impressive moat. As our knight-errant approaches the gates of the inn-castle, he is disappointed to find that a dwarf has not signaled his arrival with a blast from his trumpet. Yet, as he leads Rocinante up to greet the two "beautiful maidens" lingering out front, "Sucedió acaso que un porquero que andaba recogiendo de unos rastrojos una manada de puercos (que sin perdón así se llaman) tocó un cuerno, a cuya señal ellos se recogen, y al instante se le representó a don Quijote lo que deseaba, que era que algún enano hacía señal de su venida" (I, 2: 53). Later, as one of the prostitutes feeds him poorly cooked troutlet through his raised visor and the innkeeper pours wine into his mouth through a stem, Quijote hears a pig-gelder's sounding of a reed whistle, signaling the success of his first

adventure, “con lo cual acabó de confirmar don Quijote que estaba en algún famoso castillo y que le servían con música y que el abadejo eran truchas, el pan candeal, y las rameras damas y el ventero castellano del castillo, y con esto daba por bien empleada su determinación y salida" (I, 2: 58; see Figure 5). Don Quijote’s imagination certainly is not limited to what he sees, rather, he manipulates his soundscape to correspond with his fantasies.

Figure 5. John Vanderbank (illustrator) and William Hogarth (engraver), *Don Quijote conversa con las dos mozas a la entrada de la venta* (London, 1738; I: 10-11). Engraving from *Vida y hechos del ingenioso hidalgo Don Quixote de la Mancha* (J. & R. Tonson). Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes.

In this chapter, I examine an especially compelling and significant moment of sonic manipulation in Don Quijote's early adventures: Chapter 20 of the first part of the novel, commonly referred to as "El episodio de los batanes" or "La aventura de los batanes". This episode presents the ideal opportunity for study through the lens of sound due to its nighttime tableau and overall sensorial richness. In particular, it prompts reflections on the role of noise in the creation of character traits and the generation of emotional responses when confronted with unidentified sonic elements. I argue that the overwhelming presence of acousmatic sound—sound from an unseen source—in the episode evokes two intertwined emotions: fear, and wonder. Drawing on theories of acousmatic and Gothic sound, I explore how these acoustic phenomena inspire unease while simultaneously arousing curiosity and desire. Don Quijote and Sancho, as embodiments of these opposing but interconnected reactions, serve as personifications of how individuals respond to the unknown. The individual, affective reactions of the two characters in the face of the noises serve as the primary motivator of the protagonists and the overall trajectory of the chapter. Don Quijote and Sancho respond to the strange noises in characteristically opposing ways: they provoke a profound emotional response in Sancho, while Don Quijote, on the contrary, insists on converting the mysterious noises into his next adventure. Noise, in effect, works as a narrative mechanism that allows for different character traits to be manifested, and the context of these noises elicits specific actions and reflections that form part of how Cervantes wants his characters to be understood by readers. Ultimately, the interplay between terror and pleasure highlights the fragile boundary between reality and fantasy, as Don Quijote's perception of the unknown transforms ordinary noise into the harbinger of imagined adventures.

The Dynamics of Sound, the Passivity of Hearing

Hans Jonas' essay "The Nobility of Sight" provides an essential framework for understanding sound as an unstable and temporal phenomenon. Jonas describes sound as a "dynamical event at the locus of the object" (137), emphasizing that sound unfolds in time, its existence only bound to its occurrence. Sound cannot be grasped as a tangible object; rather, it is an ephemeral force that manifests through its interaction with the environment. Jonas writes, "The acoustic 'object' thus created is a time-object that lasts just as long as the act of the synthesis lasts, that is, as the sequence of hearing itself does" (138). This "fluid sonic nature", always grasped *in media res,* as Angela Leighton puts it in *Hearing Things: The Work of Sound in Literature*, highlights the elusive and ambiguous quality of the auditory, making it inherently challenging to pin down. She writes, "To think about hearing is therefore to have to think without fixities and boundaries, in the flux of time, that also runs through our very sentences for thinking. Hearing in time, and then lost in time, sound quickly traverses the spectrum from closely-sensed object to mere faded after-ring, remembered and interpreted on the struck quiet it leaves behind" (5). Jonas expands on this idea by emphasizing the passive nature of hearing:

> But the most important feature to be considered in comparison with the achievements of sight is the fact that for the sensation of hearing to come about the percipient is entirely dependent on something happening outside his control. All he can contribute to the situation is a state of attentive readiness for sounds to occur. He cannot let his ears wander, as his eyes do, over a field of possible percepts, already present as a material for his attention, and focus them on the object chosen,

> but he has simply to wait for a sound to strike them: he has no choice in the matter (139).[49]

The auditory experience is thus shaped by external forces that impose themselves without consent, limiting the listener's control. Mladen Dolar, in *A Voice and Nothing More,* echoes this point, noting that the listener is not only passive, but also extremely vulnerable to the auditory. Humans have eyelids to close whenever we want to prevent an image from entering our iris, but "The ears have no lids…. they cannot be closed, one is constantly exposed, no distance from sound can be maintained" (78).[50] The vulnerability of the listener is most heightened when the auditory sensation is overwhelming, uncomfortable, or "noisy". Schafer too notes this in his distinction of hearing as "a special sense", quoting Marshall McLuhan who wrote, "Terror is the normal state of any oral society for in it everything effects everything all the time" (qtd. in Schafer, 11).

Greg Hainge, in *Noise Matters: Towards an Ontology of Noise*, describes noise as a sound that resists harmonic resolution, a collection of disordered frequencies that do not conform to an ordered system (3).[51] At its most traditional level, noise has been defined as

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[49] Luis Avilés notes the vulnerability of the listener in his article, "En el límite de la mirada: El Espectador en Don Quijote". He cites a different but equally important quote of Jonas, "In hearing, the percipient is *at the mercy of environmental action*, which *intrudes* upon his sensibility without his asking and by mere intensity decides for him which of several qualities distinguishable at the moment is to be the dominant impression" (139, emphasis in original).

[50] While Dolar discusses this in the context of voice, there is no doubt that it can be more widely applied to any sonic event. I return to Dolar later in the chapter in my discussion of Sancho's verbal vulnerability.

[51] Here, Hainge echoes Plato's framework of noise in *Timaeus*, correlating sound's tone and smoothness with the regularity of its vibrations. Plato writes, "Let us in general terms define sound as a stroke transmitted through the ears by the air and passed through the brain and the blood to the soul… A rapid motion produces a shrill sound, a slower one a deeper sound; regular vibration gives an even and smooth sound, and the opposite a harsh one" (247). For Plato, the difference between musical sound and noise lies in the organization of vibrations: regularity produces harmonious sound, while irregularity generates harshness.

"any auditory sensation which is disagreeable or uncomfortable" (Hainge 9). In a chapter titled "Noise, Horror, and Death", Hainge links the horrific and noisy through a shared capacity to unsettle,

> "…horror brings us face to face with what we do not want to see, just as common-sense definitions of noise figure it as that part of a signal that *we wish to eradicate or as that which we do not want to hear*… The links between noise and horror, however, go deeper than this since… horror often performs a dramatization of the dissolution of order, *whilst noise is that which reveals the processual nature of all being, which dissolves the (desired) clear-cut division between categories*: animate and inanimate matter, self and other, subject and object, form and content, life and death" (104, my emphasis).

Thus, not only is noise rejected—in its classic definition of "unwanted sound"[52]—it is also inherently destabilizing, with the capacity to break down the boundaries that we rely on to make sense of the world.

While Hainge frames noise as a force that unsettles perception, Jacques Attali presents it as a site of potential, capable of generating new forms of meaning. Thus, a dual nature of noise is revealed: it is both a rupture in the established order and a catalyst for transformation. Luis Avilés cites an important quote of Attali in his exploration of noise in his recent article, "*No al concertado son, sino al ruido*: la acústica ruidosa en la 'Canción

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[52] R. Murray Schaefer, in *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World*, writes that this is the "most satisfactory" definition of noise (183).

desesperada' de Grisóstomo".[53] Attali, in his reflection on noise, music, and the economy of power, writes, "noise in fact does create meaning… the very absence of meaning in pure noise or in the meaningless repetition of a message, *by unchanneling auditory sensations, frees the listener's imagination.* The absence of meaning is in this case the presence of all meanings, absolute ambiguity, a construction outside meaning (33, my emphasis). From this, Avilés concludes, "Desde este punto de vista no podríamos concebir el ruido como una mera ruptura o una estridencia que llevaría a los sujetos involucrados hacia una huida o necesidad de protección (436). Not only does this analysis lead perfectly to Don Quijote's and Sancho's "fight or flight" reactions in Chapter 20, it also directly links noise to acousmatic sound through an association to ambiguity and imagination. If noise disrupts through excess and discomfort, acousmatic sound introduces a different kind of disorientation: one rooted in uncertainty and concealment.

Noise and acousmatic sound share an intrinsic connection: they both disorient the listener while simultaneously opening up new dimensions of sensory experience. By severing the link between sound and its visible referent, acousmatic sound disrupts perception, leaving an interpretive gap between what is heard and what can be visually confirmed. This ambiguity invites speculation and heightened awareness, and can provoke powerful emotions in the listener. Brian Kane, in *Sound Unseen: Acousmatic Sound in Theory*

[53] In his article, Avilés hones in on the material and relational aspects of noise, pulling from Sebastián de Covarrubias' definition of the term "ruido". He emphasizes the materiality of noise as the result of physical collisions and, thus, an association with rupture. He also highlights Hillel Schwartz's perspective (*Making Noise: From Babel to the Big Bang & Beyond*) that noise is not simply about the intensity of sound but rather the intensity of relationships—between individuals or conflicting forces—making noise a register of social and interpersonal dynamics. He makes the connection between rupture and interpersonal relationships, "En este sentido, aunque el ruido sea producido por una relación estridente de objetos (o sujetos) materiales, ese mismo producto sonoro se concibe como una ruptura de las relaciones" (435).

and Practice, discusses the origin of the term “acousmatic”, noting that it refers to a group, “akousmatikoi”, who listened to the philosopher Pythagoras from behind a veil, “to draw attention away from his physical appearance and toward the meaning of his discourse” (4). Kane discusses how the acousmatic experience differs from “direct listening”:

> The acousmatic situation changes the way we hear. By isolating the sound from the ‘audiovisual complex’ to which it initially belonged, it creates favorable conditions for reduced listening which concentrates on the sound for its own sake, as sound object, independently of its causes or meaning (4).

Yet, the opposite can also be true: when the source of a sound is hidden, unclear, or unknown, this can provoke a desire to determine its source. There is a need to recuperate the "audiovisual complex" that originated the sound, signaling a visual imperative, or at least a curiosity or desire to restore the visual context (or thing) that produced the sound. The ambiguity keeps the listener suspended in a state of imaginative engagement, intensifying the emotional and psychological effects of the sound while simultaneously gesturing toward the resolution that a visual confirmation might provide. Kane observes that “acousmatic listening” often involves soundscapes “beyond the horizon of visibility, uncertain, underdetermined, bracketed, or willfully and imaginatively suspended” (7).

The phrasing "imaginatively suspended," suggests that the absence of a visible source leaves room for the mind to wander, blurring the line between reality and perception. Imagination wants to supplement what cannot be seen, but sometimes this is not enough, and visual corroboration is needed. David Toop and Isabella van Elferen explore how this imaginative gap has the power to evoke feelings of terror, anxiety,

anticipation, or dread. Van Elferen, in *Gothic Music: The Sounds of the Uncanny,* explores this in the context of (un)heard and (dis)embodied sounds, writing,

> Sound and music are used to heighten the ambivalence of visuals and narratives as they move on the blurry boundaries between dream, fantasy and reality ... perception deceives and that hearing sound does not necessarily imply presence… Was there a sound at all, or did they just imagine it? And if there was a sound, did it have a physical source? (3-4)

The ambiguity of the source of sound heightens its emotional impact, as the unseen qualities of acousmatic sound can resonate with primal fears. These effects—ranging from unease to visceral dread—demonstrate the affective power of sound when its source is concealed. Toop, in *Sinister Resonance: The Mediumship of the Listener,* expands on this idea, describing sound as an entity that "comes from nowhere, belongs nowhere;" a force that embodies "void, fear and wonder" (VII). He continues on, writing, "Sound is a sinister resonance—an association with irrationality and inexplicability, that which *we both desire and dread*" (VIII, my emphasis).

Van Elferen echoes this dual nature of (acousmatic) sound in her observation of fear and desire as "twin impulses" (7).[54] This link between attraction and repulsion parallels her distinction between horror and Gothic genres.[55] She states, "Both (genres) are

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[54] For a deep dive into the relationship between fear and pleasure in the horror genre, see Matt Hill's *The Pleasures of Horror.*

[55] While the Gothic genre is not birthed until the 18th century, it could be argued that chapter 20 stands as a prototype of the genre in its treatment of sound to inspire feelings of terror. In Van Elferen's view, "The Gothic fully exploits these qualities of sound, music and silence. Rusty hinges, growling corridors and

simultaneously appealing and appalling, *revolving around tensions between fear and desire*… Horror explicitly brings the feared object onto the screen, into the relatively controllable space of the visual … Gothic, conversely, employs the implicit dread of terror, leaving the object of fear implicit, just outside perception" (35-36, my emphasis). The Gothic, by withholding visual confirmation, holds the potential to evoke a lingering sense of fear or wonder. Van Elferen asks, “What fears, what desires lay buried in the uncanny space beyond signification? Which ghosts are released when the surface evaporates?” (7). Sound, in this sense, becomes a haunting presence, “a ghost, a presence whose location in space is ambiguous and whose existence in time is transitory” (XV).[56] This relation between the unseen and the disruptive establishes a conceptual bridge between acousmatic sound and noise, as both phenomena challenge sensory perception and provoke emotional responses by threatening the listener’s sense of order and control.

In effect, acousmatic sound and noise disrupt the listener’s sensory framework, creating a liminal auditory space that demands imaginative engagement. Liminal spaces embody a state of in-betweenness—where the familiar has dissolved, but the new has not fully materialized.[57] They challenge stability and security, fostering anxiety and disorientation, yet they also open up transformative possibilities. The soundscape in “La

nocturnal singing represent invisible entities waiting in silence, a silence that may hide invisible, bodiless beings and virtual sounds" (25).

[56] David Toop, Angela Leighton, Brian Kane, Noël Carroll, and Isabella van Elferen all mention or explore the connection between acousmatic sound and the supernatural.

[57] From the Latin word limen, meaning “threshold”. See Victor Turner’s essay, “Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in Rites de Passage."

aventura de los batanes" serves as a prime example of this liminality: Don Quijote and Sancho find themselves in a dark, ambiguous environment where disorienting noises trigger a state of heightened anxiety. The interplay between fear and curiosity highlights the transitional nature of the space: Sancho's terror reflects the disorienting potential of the liminal, while Don Quijote's eagerness to press forward illustrates the allure of the unknown and the promise of adventure.

In Cervantes' "La aventura de los batanes", acousmatic sound and noise converge to create an auditory space of both disorientation and possibility. Don Quijote and Sancho find themselves immersed in this acousmatic noise:[58] a mysterious, persistent hammering that echoes through the night, challenging their perceptual and interpretive frameworks. Cervantes masterfully integrates sound and noise into the narrative, not just as a descriptive element of the setting, but as a force that actively shapes the psychological and narrative arc of the chapter. The instability of the soundscape blurs the boundaries between reality and imagination, reinforcing the transformative power of noise in the novel. Ultimately, noise does not simply unsettle the characters—it serves as a narrative mechanism that underscores Cervantes' larger interrogation of the limits of sensory perception and interpretation.

[58] I use the term here to describe the intersection of the concepts of noise and acousmatic sound as explored in this section. As many scholars have pointed out (Hainge, Hegarty, Attali), noise is an inherently unstable concept, shaped by cultural, subjective, and contextual factors. Rather than proposing *acousmatic noise* as a theoretical term or category, I use it here as a conceptual tool to highlight how acousmatic sound and noise in *this chapter* oscillate between disruption and generative potential, evoking both fear and inspiration in the characters.

Ruido, *Estruendo*, and Natural-Industrial Compound Noise

Begin high and wide with waterfall. Of ceaseless sounds, the roar of a cataract was the loudest in this world until the advent of enormous waterwheels. Of steady but not unceasing sounds, loudest was the storm-tide pounding of surf, loud as fulling hammers.

- Hillel Schwartz, *Making Noise: From Babel to the Big Bang & Beyond*

At the beginning of chapter 20, Don Quijote and Sancho are tiptoeing through the darkness of the night in search of water when they are suddenly struck by a pair of noises: one of loud, roaring water, and another that they can only make out as a clamoring, rhythmic clanking of fetters and chains,

> … comenzaron a caminar por el prado arriba a tiento, porque la escuridad de la noche no les dejaba ver cosa alguna; mas no hubieron andado doscientos pasos, cuando *llegó a sus oídos un grande ruido de agua*, como que de algunos grandes y levantados riscos se despeñaba. *Alegróles el ruido en gran manera*, y, parándose a escuchar hacia qué parte sonaba, oyeron a deshora *otro estruendo que les aguó el contento del agua*, especialmente a Sancho, que naturalmente era medroso y de poco ánimo. Digo que oyeron que daban unos golpes a compás, con un cierto crujir de hierros y cadenas, que, *acompañados del furioso estruendo del agua*, que pusieran pavor a cualquier otro corazón que no fuera el de don Quijote. (237, my emphasis)

This passage, firstly, underscores Jonas' claim that the listener is at the mercy of the environment: when our protagonists first encounter the sound of the water, the narrator does not write that they hear it, rather, that it arrives to their ears, "llegó a sus oídos un grande ruido de agua…". It would seem, at first glance, that Cervantes uses the terms

"ruido" and "estruendo" interchangeably in this passage. Yet, notably, the term "ruido" that can mean a pleasing sound is indeed included in *Autoridades,* "Vale tambien sonído, aunque sea apacible y no moleste" (III, 653), but no such definition exists for "estruendo". That is true here, for the "ruido" of the water is *not* perceived as noise—in accordance with its most basic definition (unwanted sound)—for hearing the crashing water pleases the pair at first, "*Alegróles el ruido* en gran manera". The sounds of the falling water, moreover, is not an acousmatic sound, since the object— water—is identifiable and is precisely what the characters are seeking; it is a recognizable and welcome sound.

On the other hand, Cervantes uses the term "estruendo" to refer to the unidentified noises of what later will be attributed to the fulling mills, "golpes a compás, con un cierto crujir de hierros y cadenas". There are two things at work here: first, "estruendo" is a stronger descriptor than *ruido*, "Ruido grande y recio" (II, 656). This emphasizes the alarming, unsettling nature of this second sound, which provokes a negative emotional response in the characters, snubbing out their short-lived pleasure at hearing the water. Yet, the use of the adjective "otro" here, "*otro* estruendo que les aguó el contento del agua" reveals the intimate connection between these sounds: they are not distinct entities, but rather, both parts of the same auditory experience. This illustrates the complicated relationship between these two terms: although an author might use two distinct words to refer to sound and noise, they remain intimately entangled.

Here, the "estruendo" functions as an acousmatic sound that disrupts the sensory coherence of the environment as its origin remains shrouded. The overwhelming noise creates a sense of unease, converting the once-pleasing sonority of the water into a

cacophony that evokes fear and confusion. This shows the complex relation between sound and noise: even harmonious or neutral sounds can become dissonant when layered with unfamiliar and unidentifiable noises. Thus, the "estruendo" heightens tension, and the absence of a visual anchor magnifies the emotional resonance of this set of noises. In the last sentence of the passage, Cervantes keeps with the term "estruendo" but now uses it to reference to the sonority of the water— *acompañados del furioso estruendo del agua*— indicating that this *sound* has been effectively converted into *noise* once it is heard in conjunction with the less-pleasing racket.

Hans Jonas sheds light on the multiplicity of sounds and their interaction with one another, concluding, "a strong sound drowns its weaker contemporaries… and beyond a limited number any multiplicities of sound merges into a compound noise" (138-9). Here, Jonas seems to be defining noise as a combination of sounds, where the interaction and/or accumulation of auditory inputs create a unified noisy phenomenon. This perspective aligns with broader definitions of noise as a complex experience rather than a singular, isolated event. He goes on to state, "The strongest sound may not be the vitally most important one in a situation, but it simply seizes the attention from among the competing ones. Against this the freedom of selection is extremely limited" (139). Because the unidentified noise effectively trumps that of the river—not necessarily in loudness, but in intensity[59]—, it follows that the "ruido" of the water is converted into "estruendo" as "compound noise". Therefore, as noted by Cervantes, it is not the noise of the fetters and

[59] By "intensity", I mean the effect that it has on the characters. There are no explicit clues provided that reveal which noise is louder, but the passage clearly indicates that the noise produced by the fulling-mills has a more significant impression on Don Quijote and Sancho.

chains that is so terrifying, but, rather, the *combination* of this noise with that of the water— "*acompañados* del furioso estruendo del agua"—that has such a striking effect on the characters. Although the emotional effects of the noise of the fulling-mills has been noted by other scholars, I would like to propose that it is, in fact, this "compound noise" that is so authoritative and inescapable. Not only does this passage reveal the complex dynamic between sound and noise, it also signals an important point about the nature of sound and its propensity to travel and influence its "victims".

It is primarily due to the nighttime setting of the episode that the sounds are so striking and overwhelming for the characters: their sense of hearing is heightened by the vast darkness that engulfs them. The narrator identifies three familiar elements as producers of the industrial sounds—one natural and two of iron—: water, fetters, and chains. In particular, Cervantes' distinction of the noises as rhythmic, with an even, regular clanking, is a pointed technique of hauntography that can be found in any horror film. The incessant, cadenced banging of the fulling hammers effectively converts into the episode's background noise. In horror films, repeated sounds or music are used to build tension and anticipation, leading up to a scare or shock moment. They can also create a sense of disorientation and confusion in the aim to unsettle the audience. Noël Carroll, in *The Philosophy of Horror, or Paradoxes of the Heart*, traces the use of sound in cinema to create a sense of horror. In particular, she pinpoints a use of offscreen sound to prompt the audience to infer supernatural events, "That is, by means of narrating via such devices as offscreen sound, dark lighting … shadows, and so on, the spectator becomes aware that her sense of what is going on is really a matter of impressions and inferences, rather than eyewitness certainty" (Carroll 154). The acousmatic sounds in this episode place Don

Quijote and Sancho in the very position Carroll describes, forced to rely on impression and inference rather than certainty, their fear fueled by the mysterious nature of the noises surrounding them.

The term, *estruendo,* in fact, has another interesting definition in the context of this episode, "Por alusión vale confusión, bullício y concurso ruidoso de gentes: y *assí de ordinario se dice, que los hombres cuerdos huyen del estruendo del mundo*" (II, 656, my emphasis). While Sancho and Don Quijote are confronted with a natural-industrial noise in the chapter rather than the clamor of a bustling crowd, the *estruendo* surely has an overwhelming and disorienting quality. We will further examine the second part of this definition—that "el hombre cuerdo"[60] tends to flee worldly noise—momentarily.

The noises are further muddied in the next scene when the two relocate to a grove nearby,

> Era la noche, como se ha dicho, escura, y ellos acertaron a entrar entre unos árboles altos, cuyas hojas, movidas del blando viento, *hacían un temeroso y manso ruido*, *de manera que la soledad, el sitio, la escuridad, el ruido del agua con el susurro de las hojas*, todo causaba horror y espanto, y más cuando vieron que ni los golpes cesaban ni el viento dormía ni la mañana llegaba, añadiéndose a todo esto el ignorar el lugar donde se hallaban (I. 20: 237-8, my emphasis).[61]

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[60] Autoridades defines cuerdo as, "Sesúdo, juicioso, prudente" (I, 684), while Covarrubias writes, "Cuerdo, el hombre de buen seso, *cordatus â corde*" (*Tesoro*, 253).

[61] L.A. Murillo's way of setting up this quote for analysis in his book notes the centrality of the senses, "The narrator is scrupulously emphatic about an impending adventure in what the senses perceive…" (67)

In this scene, Cervantes reminds us that it is not only this "compound noise" that is so terrifying, but the fact that it is heard under specific conditions: solitude (*la soledad)*, utter darkness (*la escuridad)*, and an unawareness of their location (*el ignorar el lugar donde se hallaban)*. In this moment, Don Quijote and Sancho are at the mercy of previously noted sounds, now complemented by the "blando viento" and the accompanying "susurro de las hojas". While for Fray Luis de León these peaceful sounds distance him from "el mundanal ruido" and worldly possessions,[62] the opposite occurs for don Quijote and Sancho. Cervantes' particular description of these sounds serves as a building block in the comedic and ironic construction of the novel. Had he omitted the adjectives "manso", "temeroso", or the phrase "el susurro de las hojas" the scene would have a distinct sense and effect on the reader: there would be more of an impression of the presence of *actually* frightening noises. Yet, because the scene is articulated using references to sonically-charged terms that are typically seen as pleasant—and potentially familiar ones, should it be the case that the reader was acquainted with Fray Luis— Cervantes achieves a highly unique and amusing scene.[63]

On the other hand, one might question how these more delicate sounds, *temeroso y manso*—can be heard over the tremendous "estruendo(s)". *Manso* has two relevant definitions in *Autoridades*, both of which mean non-threatening and pleasing (1) "Benigno, blando, tratáble y dulce" and (2) "Significa tambien apacible y que no tiene violencia" (II,

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[62] We are reminded of "Vida retirada", verses 58-60, "los árboles menea / con un manso ruïdo / que del oro y del cetro pone olvido".

[63] It also further serves to describe Sancho, for it is his reaction to these "typically" pleasing sounds that characterize him as prone to scaring in these types of situations. I explore this further in the fourth section of this chapter.

486), while temeroso, in this context, likely points to this definition, “Vale tambien medroso, cobarde, è indeterminado” (III, 239-240). As Jonas highlights, the sonic medium possesses a unique capacity for layering, where multiple sounds can coexist, their intensities competing and merging into a compound noise that is difficult to disentangle. In this case, while the narrator registers these softer sounds, they do not exist in isolation but rather blend into the overwhelming auditory mass—*todo* causaba horror y espanto—illustrating Jonas’ observation that the relative intensity of one sound over another contributes to the formation of noise. While Cervantes’ narration continues to increase the depth and complexity of the soundscape, he also paves the way for potentially even more quiet—though less *apacible* and *dulce*—sounds to take center stage later on in the chapter.[64]

Don Quijote's Auditory Imagination

Don Quijote’s response to the undefined noises in Chapter 20 builds upon the eerie groundwork laid in the previous chapter, “La aventura de los encamisados”. On a dark and desolate road, Don Quijote and Sancho encounter a procession of robed men,

> Iban los encamisados murmurando entre sí con una voz baja y compasiva. Esta estraña visión, a tales horas y en tal despoblado, bien bastaba para poner miedo en el corazón de Sancho y aun en el de su amo; y así fuera en cuanto a don Quijote, que ya Sancho había dado al través con todo su esfuerzo. Lo contrario le avino a su amo,

[64] I refer to, of course, Sancho’s bodily noises that I discuss later.

> al cual en aquel punto se le representó en su imaginación al vivo que aquella era una de las aventuras de sus libros. (I, 19: 219)

This scene, in contrast to Chapter 20, is not presented in an acousmatic context, for the source of the sound is visible. Yet, this adventure illustrates the distinct individual reactions of the two characters when presented with specific visible or auditory situations. Moreover, it is probable that Sancho's fear from this episode carries over into and is further compounded in the following chapter. In fact, it is during this scene in Chapter 19 in which his fear first manifests corporally in the novel, "cuya temerosa visión de todo punto remató el ánimo de Sancho Panza, el cual comenzó a dar diente con diente, como quien tiene frío de cuartana" (I, 19: 219). While Sancho shakes in his boots, the narrator explicitly notes that "Lo contrario" happens for Quijote, immediately transforming the sight into a call to arms. The gap between their responses—a heroic reinterpretation on one hand and grounded terror on the other—sets the stage for the intensified scene in Chapter 20.

Although the source of the sounds in Chapter 19 is easily determined, the noises in Chapter 20 are layered, cacophonous, and terrifyingly undefined, opening up space for Quijote to bend the adventure to his will. We turn back to Quijote's response, a monologue which L.A. Murillo, in *A Critical Introduction to Don Quixote*, deems his "grandest moment in the entire book, for the adventure opens up before him as the potential fulfillment of moral and sensory expectations" (67). Quijote proclaims,

> Bien notas, escudero fiel y legal, las tinieblas desta noche, *su estraño silencio, el sordo y confuso estruendo* destos árboles, el temeroso ruido de aquella agua en cuya busca venimos, que parece que se despeña y derrumba desde los altos montes de la Luna,

> y aquel incesable golpear que nos hiere y lastima los oídos, las cuales cosas todas juntas y cada una por sí son bastantes a infundir miedo, temor y espanto en el pecho del mesmo Marte, cuanto más en aquel que no está acostumbrado a semejantes acontecimientos y aventuras. Pues todo esto que yo te pinto *son incentivos y despertadores de mi ánimo*, que ya hace que el corazón me reviente en el pecho *con el deseo que tiene de acometer esta aventura*, por más dificultosa que se muestra (I, 20: 228, my emphasis)

Quijote's reflection on the sounds of the night begins with an apparent contradiction: he describes "las tinieblas desta noche, su *estraño silencio*" alongside an array of unsettling noises—the "sordo y confuso estruendo" of the trees, the "temeroso ruido" of rushing water, and the persistent undefined hammering noises. His observation of the *extraño silencio*—and the *sordo y confuso estruendo* of the trees, in fact—is particularly significant in the context of uncanny and eerie soundscapes. Van Elferen's analysis of Gothic sounds provides a useful framework for understanding how silence functions in these moments of heightened suspense, writing,

> "[Gothic] literary soundscapes show remarkable similarities: the advent of terror is generally preceded by an unworldly silence, aided by meteorological (wind, thunder, rain) or technical (rattling fences, hissing pipes) circumstances and announced by sounds that suggest presence (creaks, echoes, voices, music). The silences in Gothic novels are consistently described as the complete absence of sound, which, in its unnatural improbability, functions as a signifier of the

unhomely. Wind and weather, rattling and creaking are heard but only emphasise the emptiness of the soundscape" (19).

This idea is particularly relevant to Don Quijote's interpretation of his surroundings—his perception of the nighttime silence as *extraño* suggests not an absence of sound, but rather an unnatural quiet that amplifies his sense of unease. In Van Elferen's framework, silence in Gothic soundscapes is not emptiness; instead, it is filled with the suggestion of presence, a liminal state where anticipation builds. Likewise, Don Quijote's experience of *extraño silencio* is not a void but a threshold, heightening his expectation of an impending event. The fragmented, disorienting noises that punctuate this silence—the wind, the trees, the water, the distant hammering—do not break the quiet so much as emphasize its spectral quality. For Quijote, both the unnatural silence and the scattered noises serve as narrative cues, reinforcing his tendency to reinterpret his sensory experiences within his chivalric framework.

Quijote's use of the second-person form of the verb, "notas", at the start of his monologue signals a rejection of the noise from his part. Although he says that the "incesable golpear *nos* hiere y lastima los oidos"—recognizing that he is indeed at the mercy of these sounds—he removes himself from the audience that would normally fall victim to these sounds. In listing the multitude of noises and their "typical" effects, he distinguishes himself from others in his personal response, "… las cuales cosas todas juntas y cada una por sí son bastantes a infundir miedo, temor y espanto en el pecho del mesmo Marte, cuanto más en aquel que no está acostumbrado a semejantes acontecimientos y aventuras" (238). In Don Quijote's eyes, the noises serve only as a positive auditory signal

that opens an opportunity for him, "Pues todo esto que yo te pinto *son incentivos y despertadores de mi ánimo…"* (238). In the face of the distortive darkness and overwhelming noises, Don Quijote offers a culturally grounded response that reflects his role as a *caballero andante,* "…con toda la caterva de los famosos caballeros andantes del pasado tiempo, haciendo en este en que me hallo tales grandezas, estrañezas y fechos de armas…" (238).

The salient aspect that sets this adventure apart from previous ones up until this point in the novel is that Don Quijote is not presented with visual stimuli that he can manipulate to his liking, but rather an unidentified noise that prompts him to find its source.[65] Don Quijote's reaction mirrors what Angela Leighton theorizes in the introduction of her enlightening *Hearing Things: The Work of Sound in Literature,* "the imagination of the ear", or Don Ihde's coining of the term "auditory imagination". Unlike sight, which typically allows for fixed interpretations, sound requires imaginative engagement to fill the void left by its invisibility. However, in Don Quijote's case, we are aware that even visual stimuli resist fixed interpretations, for his imagination regularly intervenes to reshape and reframe what he perceives. What distinguishes this episode is the wider void created by the absence of any visual context for the sound, requiring him to rely solely on his imagination. In this sense, his auditory imagination in this scene is not

[65] Steven Hutchinson, Gonzalo Torrente-Ballester, and L.A. Murillo all argue this. Murillo specifically notes this in the context of Ch. 19 and Ch. 20, "What Quixote and Sancho perceive is phantasmal: an eerie procession of torches and mounted men in black garments and white surplices, murmuring prayers as they move across the night's landscape. Quixote does not need to disfigure the scene in his imagination in order to fit it within the 'context' of a chivalric adventure. In fact his imagination and senses are overwhelmed; but the shock, horror, and surprise quicken his mind that here (as a full saturation of the senses and challenge to his will) in all its ominous reality there awaits an adventurous encounter with a corpse" (65).

entirely different from his visual reinterpretations but instead represents an amplified version of his tendency to transform reality into the framework of his chivalric ideals. The absence of a visual context, however, expands the imaginative void, heightening his reliance on auditory imagination and elevating it to an act of heroic will—one that converts the noise(s) into the promise of adventure.

Luis Avilés, in his article "En el límite de la mirada: el espectador en Don Quijote", analyzes the effect of noise on the characters in this chapter. While primarily exploring the notions of the "espectador" "espectáculo" and "testigo" in the novel, sound and noise also form a significant part of his argument. In particular, he highlights how the nocturnal setting of Chapter 20 disrupts the sensory cohesion that typically anchors perception, describing the space as a "locus de descontextualización" where the lack of auditory and visual stimuli fails to produce clarity, "la oscuridad no permite que los demás sentidos puedan conjugarse en la percepción coherente del espacio, afectando individualmente a cada uno de los personajes" (9). This breakdown in sensory integration supports the episode's emphasis on noise as a destabilizing force, reinforcing how the unseen *batanes* amplify fear and imaginative distortion. Avilés writes, "La situación límite de confusión se convierte en una oportunidad para Don Quijote de orientar la acción hacia el origen del ruido, donde le espera la aventura" (9).

Let's return to the previously discussed term, *estruendo*, for it has further definitions that lend to an analysis of Don Quijote's reaction. *Estruendo*, while alluding to confusion

and noise,[66] has other metaphoric and symbolic meanings. The following two entries in *Autoridades* read, "Significa tambien aparato, pompa, ostentación, grandeza, magnificencia" and "Se toma assimismo por fama, nombre y memória célebre y aplaudida" (II, 656). In contrast to the first definition, the second and third cast it as something to admire or command attention. The two definitions of *estruendo*—one referring to external manifestation of grandeur ("aparato, pompa, ostentación, grandeza, magnificencia") and the other to reputation and legacy ("fama, nombre y memoria célebre y aplaudida")—are clearly linked by their shared emphasis on public perception and external display. In both cases, *estruendo* reflects a quality that suggests a kind of social resonance or spectacle. *Autoridades* quotes from Don Quijote to provide an example of this last definition, "Pues estaba mui puesto en razón, que mudando su Señor estado, mudasse tambien el nombre y le cobrasse famoso y de estruendo, como convenía a la nueva Orden y nuevo exercicio que professaba" (I, 1: 45). This quote comes from Chapter 1 of part I, where Quijote painstakingly ponders for four days what to name his steed. Here, Quijote's desire for fame and recognition drives him to elevate the ordinary and mundane into symbols of epic significance**.** He ultimately decides that "Rocinante" encapsulates the dramatic flair he seeks, "a su parecer, alto, sonoro y significativo de lo que había sido cuando fue rocín, antes de lo que ahora era, que era antes y primero de todos los rocines del mundo" (I, 1: 45). In this description, the term *sonoro* similarly suggests not only the literal resonance of the name but also its alignment with the ideals of knighthood and virtue. The sound of a name

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[66] The previously discussed definition is as follows, "Por alusión vale confusión, bullício y concurso ruidoso de gentes: y assí de ordinario se dice, que los hombres cuerdos huyen del estruendo del mundo" (II, 656). In a similar vein, Covarrubias defines estruendo as: "ruido que hacen con los pies mucha gente, del nombre Lat. ísrepitus, por la figura onomatopeyá del sonido que hacen" (*Tesoro*, 389).

can reflect the worthiness and nobility of its bearer, linking the auditory to public reception. This connection is seen in a number of sonically charged terms such as *rumor* , *son,* and *hacer ruido*.[67] Ultimately, these definitions underscore how sound and noise operate on a symbolic level, for they can represent fame, honor, or the projection of one's persona into the world. It is, quite precisely, the promise of this *estruendo* that is Quijote's *"incentivo y despertador de su ánimo"* in this chapter.

To achieve this, Quijote must transform his fear into inspiration. I say "transform", because, we should not forget that he is also at the mercy of the threatening noises. Cory Reed, in his article "'¿Qué rumor es ése?': Embodied Agency and Representational Hunger in Don Quijote 1.20", reflects on this,

> Under such uncertain environmental conditions, which cause his disorientation, even Don Quijote himself must admit fear of a noise that produces a biological response of heart palpitations. In this journey into the unseen, and therefore the unknown, darkness highlights the importance of ideation in the quixotic model and the numerous affordances available to his schemata (111).

We are reminded of the unique dynamics of sound within the narrative; unlike the visual stimuli he manipulates earlier in the novel, sound—elusive, transient, and resistant to control—demands a different kind of imaginative effort. Without a clear visual referent,

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[67] Much like the modern term "making noise", the phrase "hacer ruido" was associated with attracting attention, as Autoridades defines it: "vale causar admiración, novedad o extrañeza con alguna acción, ostentación o particularidad: como es haber hecho alguna acción gloriosa y bizarra, algún gasto o tren lúcido, ser excelente en alguna habilidad o en hermosúra" (II, 117).

Don Quijote must interpret the noise itself as the source of adventure.[68] This moment, as Alfred Rodríguez and Mariana A. Ramírez suggest in "Whistling in the Dark: Chapters 19 and 20 of Don Quijote", marks a departure from the "established narrative pattern" of Don Quijote's adventures—what they describe as the "systematic superimposition of the imaginative-literary upon the 'real,'" or more plainly, "Quijote's demented alterations of reality" (108). The authors argue that chapters 19 and 20 signal a shift, aligning more closely with the Baroque tradition's interrogation of perception and reality; up to this point, the relationship between appearance and reality had been presented too straightforwardly.[69] The nighttime setting of these chapters provides the ideal stage to "set the baroque record straight": "nocturnity serves as a conditioned experimental chamber in which the two most highly developed and regarded of our senses, sight and hearing, are consecutively tested, tested and found, of course, baroquely wanting" (109).[70] This "experimental chamber" heightens the distortive power of sound and emphasizes the limits of sensory perception.

[68] Torrente-Ballester states in *El Quijote como juego*, "Si don Quijote hubiera sabido de qué se trataba, es indudable que lo hubiera transformado; pero, al no ser visible y al no poder identificarlo, se mantiene a la expectativa, acepta la única realidad perceptible, que es el ruido (que forma parte de la realidad «como efecto»), mientras Sancho se muere de miedo. Al descubrir, con la luz, los batanes, don Quijote se ríe. ¿De su miedo, del de Sancho? El narrador no lo dice y todo cuanto se pueda añadir aquí será mera conjetura" (113). Torrente-Ballester's note about the uncertainty of the source of Quijote's laughter is something I return to later in this chapter.

[69] In particular, they point to the unreliability of the senses as formed in the Baroque tradition. Rodriguez and Ramírez argue that Cervantes is "keenly aware of the unacceptable nature" of this literary trajectory, and thus takes the opportunity in chapters 19 and 20 to muddy the relation between appearance-reality (108).

[70] Although Rodriguez and Ramírez do not mention it, there is a quote that serves as direct evidence to the muddying of the senses just a few chapters prior in ch. 18, "El miedo que tienes —dijo don Quijote— te hace, Sancho, que ni veas ni oyas a derechas, porque uno de los efectos del miedo es turbar los sentidos y hacer que las cosas no parezcan lo que son" (I, 18: 211).

Murillo similarly argues that Chapter 20 marks an inflection point in the trajectory of the novel, arguing a shift from purely imaginative adventures to ones that increasingly focus on willpower and moral implications. He begins his study of these three chapters, stating that they, "carry to their zenith Quixote's exalted imagination and heroic exertion. Yet by degrees Cervantes begins to lay greater emphasis on his motives and intentions, thus less on the travesty of reality that his fantasy will conceive" (64). Thus, argues Murillo, this set of chapters signals a departure from the earlier narrative pattern. As he points out, the nighttime setting functions as a stage where sensory perceptions—particularly sight and hearing—are unreliable, allowing Quijote to experience the adventure without needing to reinvent it, "The hidalgo's will and imagination are free (as they will never be again) to soar and elaborate on the mythos of his heroic role. His illusion is either thwarted or fulfilled, but to no great consequence" (64). Yet, these chapters mark an end to this period, for what is to come will reflect a shift from imagination-driven adventures to those that more rigorously test him, "the test of adventure will lay less heavily on Quixote's imagination than on his will. Consequently, his adventures will take on social implications that cast his heroic and pathological exertions in a new light" (65).

In Murillo's view, Chapter 20 is pivotal because the adventure focuses solely on Don Quijote's heroic response to the noises: "on incentive and motive rather than outcome" (67). Don Quijote's monologue—"Sancho amigo, has de saber que yo nací por querer del cielo en esta nuestra edad de hierro para resucitar en ella la de oro..." (I, 20: 227)—marks, according to Murillo, the peak of his imaginative drive. From this moment forward the narrative descends downward "comically, to and around Sancho's bodily presence" (68). This shift signals a transition from the grand possibilities of adventure to the inevitable

clash between Quijote's ideals and reality. By reframing fear as a call to heroism, Don Quijote anchors himself in the chivalric tradition, yet his response to the fulling mills tests more than his imagination: it challenges his resolve. Cervantes thus heightens the interaction between perception and reality, heroism and absurdity, as Quijote charges forward into a soundscape that remains as undefined and elusive as the limits of his chivalric aspirations.

"Alguna cosa nueva debe de ser, que las aventuras y desventuras nunca comienzan por poco": Sancho's reaction

Steven Hutchinson and George A. Shipley echo Murillo's claim that the remaining part of Chapter 20—and thus, the majority of it—belongs to Sancho Panza. Hutchinson, in his article, "Los primeros movimientos no son en mano del hombre": Retórica de la emoción en *Don Quijote*", argues, "Es aquí donde se redondea el personaje de Sancho Panza en toda su plenitud de cuerpo, alma, e ingenio, y donde se redefinen las relaciones entre caballero y escudero" (200). This chapter marks a pivotal moment for Sancho's character, as Shipley underscores in his article "Sancho's Jokework", writing, "Chapter 20 of Don Quijote, part I, is Sancho Panza's chapter. In it, Sancho is mentioned fifty-three times, his master but thirty-nine. The point of the chapter is discovered by attending to Sancho, to what he says and does, and to the narrator's way of treating him" (135). Hutchinson and Reed note that Sancho effectively converts into the protagonist of this chapter; more than ever before, Sancho's role is solidified as a central and complex figure in the narrative. In particular, this is a standout chapter for Sancho due to his trickery; "this episode… represents one of the first moments in which Sancho Panza acquires and exercises agency" (Reed, 99).

Insofar as Chapter 20 marks a turning point for Quijote, it does the same—if not even more drastically—for Sancho. Hutchinson's description of the characters' reactions to stimuli is key to our overall understanding of their respective trajectories,

> Hasta ahora los protagonistas sienten lo mismo porque están en el mismo lugar al mismo tiempo, sometidos a los mismos estímulos, pero ya se señala una significativa discrepancia arraigada en el temperamento de cada uno que afecta a sus emociones… Igual que en el capítulo anterior, don Quijote, por su parte, fiel a su propio temperamento e ideología de caballero andante, saca fuerzas de flaqueza**,** convirtiendo su miedo inicial en voluntad de emprender una aventura. Consideremos las implicaciones de esta divergencia (202)**.**[71]

We recall that earlier in the chapter Cervantes describes Sancho as *"naturalmente… medroso y de poco ánimo"*, and this episode serves as an explicit demonstration of this specific character trait. I think the adjective "atónito" would be most appropriate to describe Sancho's state upon hearing the unidentified sounds. Covarrubias defines this term as: "vale el espantado, o de algun rayo, o gran trueno, o *del ruido de algún gran golpe*…" (*Tesoro*, 101, my emphasis)[72]. It is significant that "atónito" describes an affective response exclusively related to an aural experience. This term, encompassing that

[71] Alfred Rodriguez and Mariana A. Ramírez note this key aspect about the chapter as well, calling it a "novelist's deviation" from the characterization in the novel up until this point (107-108).

[72] The full definition reads, "vale el espantado o de algún rayo, o gran trueno, o del ruido de algún gran golpe, y dixose del verbo attononis por tronar reciamente el cielo, y es, que como dicen los Filósofos: *excellens sensibile corrupit sensum,* Como la demasiada luz nos priva de la vista, así el sonido grande y desproporcionado a nuestro oír, le altera y alborota: de manera que hasta sosegarse no oye cosa distinta, sino un gran ruido zumbido en los oídos" (*Tesoro*, 101). This definition once again highlights the concept of compound noise, as it suggests that an overwhelming or disproportionate sound actively disrupts the senses, rendering individual sounds indistinguishable.

sentiment of being startled, frightened, or overwhelmed by a loud sound, illustrates that a reaction of fear is a deeply human experience.[73] What truly amplifies Sancho's distress, however, is not just the external soundscape but Don Quijote's reaction to it—his determination to confront the source of the noises. When Don Quijote declares his plan, Sancho's response is deeply emotional: "Cuando Sancho oyó las palabras de su amo, comenzó a llorar con la mayor ternura del mundo…." (I, 20: 228). In this instance, it is Quijote's words, more than the eerie noises themselves, that provoke Sancho's breakdown and drive his actions throughout the rest of the chapter.

In the midst of his blubbering, Sancho is quick to lament and try to convince Quijote to stay (see Figure 6),

> Señor, yo no sé por qué quiere vuestra merced acometer esta tan temerosa aventura. Ahora es de noche, aquí no nos vee nadie: bien podemos torcer el camino y desviarnos del peligro, aunque no bebamos en tres días; y pues no hay quien nos vea, menos habrá quien nos note de cobardes…. (I, 20: 228-229)

Here, Sancho utilizes practical arguments and appeals to logic in an attempt to sway Quixote. He points out the darkness, the lack of witnesses, and the possibility of simply avoiding the potential threat altogether. He even cites the village priest's wisdom about the perils of seeking danger, hoping to appeal to Don Quixote's sense of religious duty. Additionally, Sancho's awareness of social perception and reputation is evident in his

[73] This aligns with one of the definitions of "ruido" that reads, "Metaphoricamente se toma tambien por novedad o extrañeza, que immúta el ánimo" (III, 653). Noise, in this sense, has the potential to alter character's state of being, their "ánimo", either positively or negatively. Quijote falls on the positive side here, for he claims that the noises are a "despertador de su animo".

observation that the darkness can work in their favor: "y pues no hay quien nos vea, menos habrá quien nos note de cobardes…". This underscores his understanding of the importance of public image in the chivalric world: in the absence of witnesses, retreating from this "threat" wouldn't tarnish their reputation or violate the knightly code.

Figure 6. José Jiménez Aranda (illustrator), *Sancho se lamenta por la temeridad de don Quijote* (Madrid, 1905-1908; VI: I, 20). Engraving from *El ingenioso hidalgo Don Quijote de la Mancha* (R. L. Cabrera). Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes.

As he continues, Sancho's appeal to Quijote becomes increasingly personal and emotionally charged as he reveals his own vulnerabilities and motivations—perhaps suspecting that Don Quijote won't be convinced by logic—,

> Y cuando todo esto no mueva ni ablande ese duro corazón, muévale el pensar y creer que apenas se habrá vuestra merced apartado de aquí, cuando yo, de miedo,

dé mi ánima a quien quisiere llevarla. Yo salí de mi tierra y dejé hijos y mujer por venir a servir a vuestra merced, creyendo valer más y no menos; pero como la cudicia rompe el saco, a mí me ha rasgado mis esperanzas, pues cuando más vivas las tenía de alcanzar aquella negra y malhadada ínsula que tantas veces vuestra merced me ha prometido, veo que en pago y trueco della me quiere ahora dejar en un lugar tan apartado del trato humano (I, 20: 229).

Sancho's character development is illuminated in moments like these where he demonstrates a strategic use of rhetoric to navigate difficult situations. Howard Mancing, in the article "La Retórica de Sancho Panza," highlights the speech's length, logical construction, and stylistic shifts, arguing that Sancho demonstrates sophisticated rhetorical techniques.[74] He also notes a change in the flow of his appeal, "Sancho cambia de técnica y emplea el pathos y hasta el ethos; es decir, si no puede hacer que responda Don Quijote en el nivel intelectual, le hablará en términos emocionales y aludirá a su proprio carácter moral" (719). More importantly, Sancho shifts the focus onto Don Quijote, assigning

[74] Mancing's central claim in his article, that Sancho demonstrates intellectual capacity ("Sancho es, desde el principio, mucho más inteligente e intelectualmente capaz de lo que solemos creer" (717)), is rather unconvincing when examined in the broader context of the novel. While it is evident that Sancho is cunning, Mancing's assessment of his "intellectual capacity" is surely overestimated. Throughout the novel, Sancho frequently acts and speaks in ways that illustrate his "poca sal en la mollera." One example of this is his poorly constructed story in this chapter. Quijote criticizes Sancho's convoluted and repetitive manner of storytelling, and sarcastically reflects on Sancho's storytelling abilities, "Dígote de verdad... que tú has contado una de las más nuevas consejas, cuento o historia que nadie pudo pensar en el mundo, y que tal modo de contarla ni dejarla jamás se podrá ver ni habrá visto en toda la vida, aunque no esperaba yo otra cosa de tu buen discurso" (I, 20: 235). While Sancho might display practical wit and survival instincts, his storytelling reflects a lack of sophistication and coherence. This supports the view that Sancho is "listo" in his quick thinking but falls short of possessing intellectual depth. Interestingly, Don Quijote attributes Sancho's incoherence to the noise they are affected by, "mas no me maravillo, pues quizá estos golpes que no cesan te deben de tener turbado el entendimiento" (I, 20: 235). This underscores a broader theme of how external auditory stimuli can affect cognitive clarity and perception.

responsibility for his well-being to his master. Sancho emphasizes not only that he left his home, wife, and children to serve Don Quijote, but also that his faith in those sacrifices has been shattered by the threat of being abandoned in a desolate, dreadful place. Sancho reminds Quijote that his loyalty and sacrifices deserve to be reciprocated, framing his master as both the cause of his current predicament and the key to his survival.

Sancho eventually goes for one last hail-mary, urging the pursuit to at least wait until morning, resulting in an interesting exchange between the two. Sancho says,

> … a lo que a mí me muestra la ciencia que aprendí cuando era pastor, no debe de haber desde aquí al alba tres horas, porque la boca de la bocina está encima de la cabeza y hace la media noche en la línea del brazo izquierdo.
>
> ¿Cómo puedes tú, Sancho —dijo don Quijote—, ver dónde hace esa línea, ni dónde está esa boca o ese colodrillo que dices, si hace la noche tan escura, que no parece en todo el cielo estrella alguna?
>
> —Así es —dijo Sancho—, pero tiene el miedo muchos ojos y ve las cosas debajo de tierra, cuanto más encima en el cielo, puesto que por buen discurso bien se puede entender que hay poco de aquí al día. (I, 20: 229).

Sancho's attempt at explaining his bluff—*"tiene el miedo muchos ojos…"*—wittily echoes what Quijote preached to him when Sancho refused to attack the "armies" of sheep in chapter 18: "El miedo que tienes… te hace, Sancho, que ni veas ni oyas a derechas, porque uno de los efectos del miedo es turbar los sentidos y hacer que las cosas no parezcan lo que son" (I, 18: 211). The above dialogue is particularly compelling in the

context of sensory perception and the unknown. Just as the unidentified, acousmatic sounds distort the characters' sense of reality—producing fear in the absence of visual confirmation—Sancho, gripped by that same fear, projects a vision onto the night sky as a means of self-protection. These fabrications, while disconnected from reality, serve as a form of self-protection, fulfilling an immediate psychological need for understanding and relief. His claim to see what is imperceptible (*"tiene el miedo muchos ojos y ve las cosas debajo de la tierra"*) mirrors how Don Quijote and Sancho hear what remains unseen, reinforcing the idea that fear fills in sensory gaps with imagined threats. If acousmatic sound forces the listener into a state of uncertainty, Sancho's self-generated vision operates similarly, granting him a fragile sense of control over the unknown. Thus, Sancho's fabricated vision and acousmatic sound share a common thread: both involve objects that lie beyond the immediate grasp of the senses, leaving imagination and fear to fill the void. And, in both instances, fear functions as a creative force.

Sancho's final phrase—*"por buen discurso bien se puede entender que hay poco de aquí al día"*—further illustrates his *listo* nature; it is evident that he is not actually seeing things but rather constructing an explanation out of fear. By replacing his initial false sensory perception with reason, he demonstrates adaptability. When Don Quijote challenges him, Sancho becomes even more *listo*, replacing uncertainty with rational discourse to try to maintain control over the situation.

The link between voice and deception—a subject I explore further in Chapter 3—is also reflected in this exchange between Quijote and Sancho. Mladen Dolar comments on the dual nature of vocal expression, emphasizing both its *authority above* and its *exposure to*

the other. On one hand, voice possesses a certain power—an *"authority"*, in Dolar's words— that can perfectly capitalize on the vulnerability of hearing. Yet, it also implies an innate vulnerability in what might be revealed or said from the core of a subject, "The voice comes from unfathomable invisible interior and brings it out, lays it bare, discloses, uncovers, reveals that interior" (80). In this sense, voice is both an instrument of control and a source of exposure, making the speaker susceptible to unintended revelation. Dolar's conceptualization of voice as vulnerability plays out in this scene, as Sancho's attempt at deception fails—Quijote picks up on the inconsistencies in what he says.

Sancho's range of efforts are ultimately in vain: Don Quijote ignores his squire's pleas to his heart, heeding those of God instead, "… que no se ha de decir por mí ahora ni en ningún tiempo que lágrimas y ruegos me apartaron de hacer lo que debía a estilo de caballero; y, así, te ruego, Sancho, que calles, que Dios, que me ha puesto en corazón de acometer ahora esta tan no vista y tan temerosa aventura…" (I, 20: 230). In response, Sancho is forced to transition from the audible (language) to another sense—touch—, quickly and discreetly tying Rocinante's hind legs together so that Quijote is unable to ride away (see Figure 7). This is a key moment for Sancho; although he is unable to verbally distract Quijote with his lies or anecdotes, he is able to successfully physically detain his *amo* and survive the night. If "La Dulcinea Encantada" episode in the second part of the novel represents the absolute maximum in the trajectory of Sancho's trickery, chapter 20 of the first part of the novel marks its origin.[75] Sancho delights in Quijote's struggles, taking

[75] José-Carlos Mainer, in *Historia mínima de la literatura española*, notes as well this importance of Chapter 20 and the relation between amo and squire, "Puede que el *Quijote* naciera como una *novela* ejemplar más, que acababa en el primer regreso de hidalgo a casa. Pero la introducción de Sancho Panza lo modificó todo, y a partir de la aventura de los batanes (I, XX), el intercambio dejó de ser el de un amo irascible y moralizador que tiene un criado inocentón y egoísta, para ser el propio de un caballero cultivado y hasta afectuoso que

the opportunity to rub it in his masters face, “Ea, señor, que el cielo, conmovido de mis lágrimas y plegarias, ha ordenado que no se pueda mover Rocinante; y si vos queréis porfiar y espolear y dalle, será enojar a la fortuna y dar coces, como dicen, contra el aguijón" (I, 20: 230). It is Quijote’s turn to lament (his inability to depart on his conquest), to which Sancho replies, “No hay que llorar… que yo entretendré a vuestra merced contando cuentos desde aquí al día…” (I, 20: 231).

Figure 7. John Vanderbank (illustrator) and Gerard van der Gucht (engraver), *Sancho inmoviliza a Rocinante* (London, 1738; I: 174-175). Engraving from *Vida y hechos del ingenioso hidalgo Don Quixote de la Mancha* (J. & R. Tonson). [Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes.]()

charla con un hombre socarrón y lleno de sentido común” (91). Mainer, in contrast to Mancing, argues that Sancho is cunning, rather than “intellectually gifted.”

Cory Reed approaches this chapter through the lens of embodied agency, emphasizing that the entire episode revolves around Don Quixote and Sancho's attempts to understand and categorize the various noises they hear throughout the night. He connects the characters' reactions to the sounds of the fulling mills to the ecological model of embodied cognition. This model proposes that people form their understanding of the world through continuous physical interaction with their environment. This means that Don Quixote and Sancho's interpretations of the sounds are shaped by their physical presence in a world of sensory stimuli. Reed states that, based on the concept of "affordances" in embodied cognition, Don Quixote and Sancho's reactions to the noises are driven by an embodied need to ensure their continued survival. Their fear and uncertainty lead them to make sense of the situation by fitting it into their preexisting schemas. While Don Quixote interprets the sounds as signs of an impending chivalric adventure, Sancho focuses on practical concerns, such as the possibility of danger and the need to appease his master.

Reed connects Sancho's storytelling in this episode to his attempts to manage his fear and exert agency over Don Quixote. He explains this using the concept of "representational hunger," a term coined by Ellen Spolsky to describe the human desire to consume stories. This concept, according to Reed, suggests that storytelling, like eating, can fulfill a biological need.[76] In this case, by telling Don Quixote a story, Sancho aims to

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[76] Reed also notes the use of phrases like "infundir miedo, temor y espanto en el pecho" (I,20:209) "el miedo que había entrado en su corazón" (I, 20: 215) and "todo saldrá en la colada" (I, 20:220). The latter can be read as a play on the word "cola"["tail end"], which is comically ironic in light of Sancho's bowel movement to come.

distract both of them from their anxiety and buy time until daybreak. Fear, in fact, serves as a catalyst for storytelling; the terrifying sounds of the unknown, amplified by the darkness, trigger a survival instinct in Sancho, compelling him to use storytelling as a means of controlling the situation and managing his fear. By telling a story, Sancho attempts to create a sense of order and familiarity in a situation that feels chaotic and threatening. Reed also highlights Sancho's use of "Machiavellian intelligence," noting his ability to understand and manipulate Don Quixote's thought processes to his advantage. The terrifying soundscape, combined with Sancho's grounded nature, forces him to rely on storytelling as a means of delaying confrontation with the unknown. This episode marks a turning point in his character development, revealing his growing agency and resourcefulness while highlighting the link between fear, storytelling, and the human need for control in moments of uncertainty.

As if this episode wasn't jam-packed enough with joys of the senses, Cervantes adds a cherry on top with the introduction of the olfactory sense. He writes, "En esto, parece ser o que el frío de la mañana que ya venía, o que Sancho hubiese cenado algunas cosas lenitivas, o que fuese cosa natural —que es lo que más se debe creer—, a él le vino en voluntad y deseo de hacer lo que otro no pudiera hacer por él" (I, 20: 235).[77] Sancho's terrified state effectively paralyzes him, yet he somehow manages to masterfully "get rid of

[77] Interesting are the links between noise and the body, in particular with the term "nausea". Hainge notes that the term noise has etymologic ties to the nausea in both English and French, "'Noise' itself can be traced back to the Latin *nausea* which evokes disgust, annoyance or discomfort and in vernacular Latin there exists a meaning of this word more directly linked to our own concerns here, namely, 'unpleasant situation, noise, or quarrel'" (*Noise Matters*, 67-68).

the problem" one handedly, all while still clutching to Quijote.[78] Perhaps the most comical aspect of the scene is the description of Sancho's attempt to keep his "movements" soundless. "….le pareció que no podía mudarse sin hacer estrépito y ruido, y comenzó a apretar los dientes y a encoger los hombros, recogiendo en sí el aliento todo cuanto podía; pero, con todas estas diligencias, fue tan desdichado que al cabo vino a hacer un poco de ruido, *bien diferente de aquel que a él le ponía tanto miedo"* (I, 20: 236, my emphasis). The use of the terms "estrépito"[79] and "ruido", here, coupled with the phrase, "bien diferente de aquel que a él le ponía tanto miedo*"* demonstrates Cervantes' apt ability to weave multiple sensory experiences into a single moment. By juxtaposing Sancho's fearful paralysis with the absurdity of his failed attempt at silence, Cervantes masterfully blends humor and tension and amplifies the chaos of the episode.

Don Quijote inquiries about the unpleasant sound, "Qué rumor es ese, Sancho?" The term "rumor", or specifically a "ruido blando, suave y de poco sonído", adds a beautiful contrast to the much louder noises that the two have faced throughout the chapter and again prompts the reader to ponder how this weak sound can be perceived over the others. Sancho's reply to Quijote's inquiry marks the peak of his ingenuity in this chapter, "No sé, señor... Alguna cosa nueva debe de ser, que las aventuras y desventuras nunca comienzan por poco" (I, 20: 236). Sancho's wit here effectively anticipates the final revelation of the

[78] We recall the close proximity of the two characters, for Sancho has clutched on to Quijote—still mounted on Rocinante—in sheer fear, "puso una mano en el arzón delantero y la otra en el otro, de modo que quedó abrazado con el muslo izquierdo de su amo, sin osarse apartar dél un dedo: tal era el miedo que tenía a los golpes que todavía alternativamente sonaban." (I, 20: 235)

[79] The term estrépito is used for the first time in the chapter here, defined in reference to other noisy terms: "Ruido, estruendo" (II, 652).

batanes, as a *des*ventura: an escapade that turns out to be shit in the end. Don Quijote's insistence on converting the noises into his next adventure—a sentiment later so comically echoed by Sancho in reference to his bodily functions—sums up the character's distinct responses to the audible: one's attempt to prove his bravery as a *caballero andante,* and the other's *"*industria" in successfully tricking his master. As Reed puts it, Quixote's question to Sancho, "Qué rumor es ése?": "might as well serve as the main point of the chapter as it thematically links Sancho's digestion to the overall plot of the adventure: the perception of unfamiliar noises and the cognitive attempt to assess their sources and the affordances they offer." (109).

Sancho's digestive adventure concludes successfully, with him managing to avoid making any noise this time, "Tornó otra vez a probar ventura, y sucedióle tan bien, que sin más ruido ni alboroto que el pasado se halló libre de la carga que tanta pesadumbre le había dado" (I:20, 216).[80] The scene continues:

> Mas como don Quijote *tenía el sentido del olfato tan vivo como el de los oídos* y Sancho estaba tan junto y cosido con él, que casi por línea recta subían los vapores hacia arriba, no se pudo escusar de que algunos no llegasen a sus narices; y apenas hubieron llegado, cuando él fue al socorro, apretándolas entre los dos dedos, *y con tono algo gangoso dijo*:
>
> —Paréceme, Sancho, que tienes mucho miedo.

[80] "Alboroto" is another noisy term that has not yet appeared in chapter 20 up until this point. Like "*estruendo"*, it conveys a sense of chaotic disturbance or disorder, particularly in relation to human activity, "Vale tambien bullício, confusión, y desorden, causado de grande concurréncia de personas, u de cosas à un mismo tiempo, que desassossiegan y alteran la quietúd, y ocasionan ruído y desassossiego" (I, 172).

—Sí tengo —respondió Sancho—, mas ¿en qué lo echa de ver vuestra merced ahora más que nunca?

—En que ahora más que nunca hueles, y no a ámbar —respondió don Quijote.

(I, 20: 236, my emphasis, see Figure 8)

Cervantes highlights the interplay of the senses while introducing another sonic element in Don Quijote's tone of voice. Reacting to Sancho's odor, Don Quijote speaks *con tono algo gangoso*, his nasal pitch adding yet another auditory dimension to the scene. This detail not only conveys his physical response (pinching his nose) but also maintains his attempt at authority in the exchange. The nasal quality bridges the olfactory and auditory, reinforcing the humor and layered communication between the characters.

Figure 8. Joaquín Heredia (illustrator), *Don Quijote percibe el olor de Sancho Panza* (Mexico City, 1842; I: I, 20). Engraving from *El ingenioso hidalgo Don Quijote de la Mancha* (Ignacio Cumplido). Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes.

Bénédicte Torres, in her article *"Sentidos corporales y 'aprehensiones' del mundo por Sancho Panza"* highlights the significance of the defecation scene within the chapter's broader emphasis on the sensory experience. She argues that Sancho's fear— manifesting as an uncontrollable bowel movement—reflects the way in which Cervantes uses bodily functions to explore the limitations of the senses. While Don Quixote is busy trying to make sense of the mysterious noises coming from the fulling mills, Sancho is preoccupied with his own internal, bodily experience. This disconnect is a recurring thread in the episodes leading up to this chapter, for Sancho's body has endured a relentless series of ordeals. He suffers significant beatings in consecutive episodes—first at the hands of the *yangüeses* (ch. 15), and then by the innkeeper (ch. 17). Shortly after, he vomits after drinking the infamous *bálsamo de Fierabrás*, only to be violently tossed around in a blanket hours later. The absurdity of the blanket tossing episode and Sancho's pain is highlighted by the narrator, "Las voces que el mísero manteado daba fueron tantas, que llegaron a los oídos de su amo, el cual, deteniéndose a escuchar atentamente, creyó que alguna nueva aventura le venía, hasta que claramente conoció que el que gritaba era su escudero" (I, 19: 223).[81] Yet again, we see a connection between noise and adventure; Don Quijote's misinterpretation of Sancho's cries reflects the ongoing disconnect between the two characters' experiences—while Quijote imagines heroic exploits, Sancho suffers very real bodily consequences.[82]

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[81] It's hard to say which was a lower point for Sancho, vomiting the balm, or being blanket-tossed. When he is vomiting, "primero que vomitase le dieron tantas ansias y bascas, con tantos trasudores y desmayos, que él pensó bien y verdaderamente que era llegada su última hora" (I, 17: 197).

[82] In some scenes, Don Quijote is unable to prevent a bodily response, like the iconic co-vomiting scene in chapter 18; Quijote vomits el *bálsamo* directly on Sancho's face, which disgusts Sancho so deeply that he returns the favor.

This moment of “scatological” humor, as Torres puts it, further underscores the contrast between Don Quixote's idealistic perspective and Sancho's grounded experience. Sancho’s defecation is something he cannot regulate, reflecting his vulnerability and loss of control. In response, Quijote re-establishes the hierarchical separation between himself and Sancho, feeling absolutely disrespected by this act, “—Reórate treso cuatro alla, amigo —dijo don Quijote (todo esto sin quitarse los dedos de las narices)—, y desde aquí adelante ten más cuenta con tu persona y con lo que debes a la mía; que la mucha conversación que tengo contigo ha engendrado este menosprecio” (I, 20: 237). The experience of smell, rather than uniting the characters in their shared adversity, separates them, and effectively cancels the physical and emotional closeness that Sancho had relied upon to manage his fear.

From Cries to *Carcajadas*: The (Un)expected Reveal

Parturient montes nascetur ridiculus mus.
(Mountains will go into labor, and a silly little mouse will be born.)
Horace, *Ars Poetica*

At long last, dawn breaks, Rocinante is freed, and nothing holds Quijote back from forging ahead on his delayed adventure. The narrator notes Sancho’s quick ability to loosen Rocinante’s restraints without being discovered, “con mucho tiento”, quickly untying Quijote’s steed and hitching up his trousers. Dawn breaks and the world looks different, but an uneasy feeling lingers, “Acabó en esto de descubrirse el alba, y de parecer distintamente las cosas, y vio don Quijote que estaba entre unos árboles altos, que ellos eran castaños, que hacen la sombra muy escura. Sintió también que el golpear no cesaba, pero no vio quién lo

podía causar…" (I, 20: 237).[83] Despite the morning light, Sancho's horror remains; when Quijote begins to trod off, he once again resorts to weeping. Rocinante leads the way forward, and both he and Sancho are still notably unsettled (see Figure 9). Staying close to Quijote, Sancho stretches his neck and peers cautiously between Rocinante's legs, hoping to catch a glimpse of whatever had left them "tan suspenso y medroso" (I, 20: 238).

Figure 9. José Jiménez Aranda (illustrator), *Dieron en un pradecillo que al pie de unas altas peñas se hacía...* (Madrid, 1905-1908; I: 20). Photomechanical illustration from *El ingenioso hidalgo Don Quijote de la Mancha* (R. L. Cabrera). Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes.

The anticlimactic moment reveals the source of the terrifying noises to be nothing more than six *mazos de batán*—fulling hammers used in textile production. The transition from the acousmatic sound of the fulling hammers to their revealed source shows a shift from auditory ambiguity to visual certainty, erasing the tension from the previous night. As

[83] The visual cue here, that the trees make a dark shadow, extends the uncertain or mysterious feeling despite the fact that the characters are now able to rely on their visual sense.

previously discussed, acousmatic sound evokes a heightened emotional response by leaving the source hidden, allowing the mind to wander and imagination to fill in the gaps. The eventual discovery of the fulling hammers—a mundane explanation for an extraordinary buildup— erodes the uncanny and sublime allure of the noises, transforming what once inspired awe and terror into the ordinary and mechanical. This subversion of expectations forces readers to confront the fragility of perception, as the emotional impact of the unknown dissolves in the face of visual clarity. A particularly fitting definition of *ruido* that perfectly encapsulates this resolution comes into play here, “Metaphoricamente se toma por apariencia grande, en las cosas que en la realidad del hecho no tienen substancia.”[84]

Don Quijote, on the one hand, is shocked by the revelation, "enmudeció y pasmóse de arriba abajo." The two exchange glances:

> Miróle Sancho y vio que tenía la cabeza inclinada sobre el pecho, con muestras de estar corrido. Miró también don Quijote a Sancho y violе tenía los carrillos hinchados y la boca llena de risa, con evidentes señales de querer reventar con ella, y no pudo su melanconía tanto con él, que a la vista de Sancho pudiese dejar de reírse; y como vio Sancho que su amo había comenzado, soltó la presa de manera que tuvo necesidad de apretarse las ijadas con los puños, por no reventar riendo.

[84] Autoridades, in the last provided definition of *ruido*, notes one of the earliest literary uses of this proverb in Fernando de Rojas’ *La Celestina* (1499). In Act 9, Celestina dismisses Melibea’s sudden distress with the phrase “más es el ruydo que las nuezes.”, critiquing Melibea’s ailment and suggesting her symptoms stem more from emotional unrest than true physical illness.

> Cuatro veces sosegó, y otras tantas volvió a su risa, con el mismo ímpetu que primero (I, 20: 239).

Here, laughter is portrayed as something that has the power to physically overwhelm. It fills Sancho's mouth and cheeks, coupled by the imagery of holding his sides to prevent bursting (see Figure 10). Avilés puts it quite fittingly in the context of incontrollable bodily urges, "Frente a ese discurso Sancho sufre de otra descarga que no puede controlar. La risa y la mierda representan los únicos testimonios de los despojos de esta aventura venida a menos" ("En el límite de la mirada", 14). Here, Cervantes not only adds a comedic element but reflects the uncontrollable and infectious qualities of joy; Quijote's melancholia dissolving in the face of Sancho's irrepressible amusement. This reciprocity of laughter momentarily erodes the boundary between master and squire, their dynamic shifting from hierarchical to communal through this simple, universal experience. The reactions of these two, as different as they had been throughout the night, reach a moment of resonance here, however fleeting.

Sancho's struggle to contain his laughter, contrasted with Quijote's smile, adds another sonic element to the character's reactions. Don Quijote's grin, as a silent act, suggests an introspective and subdued reaction. On the other hand, laughter is inherently noisy and often uncontrollable, as seen in Sancho's exaggerated physical struggle to suppress it. In this moment, Sancho does not smile; instead, his mouth briefly stifles the sound that inevitably bursts forth, triggered by Don Quijote's silent smile. These distinct emotional responses reveal contrasting states: one as an attempt to maintain composure and dignity, and the other as a visceral release, breaking free from such constraints. This

progression—from silence to noise and from internalized to external expression—illustrates how sound, or its absence, marks their differing emotional conditions.

Figure 10. José Jiménez Aranda (illustrator), *Sancho se burla de don Quijote por el miedo a los batanes* (Madrid, 1905-1908; I: 20). Engraving from *El ingenioso hidalgo Don Quijote de la Mancha* (R. L. Cabrera). Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes.

At the same time, however, Sancho's and Quijote's temporary shared laughter also indicates a release of pent-up energy and nervousness. Sancho suffers four separate fits of laughter, again suggesting that his outbursts are psychologically necessary. Hutchinson acknowledges the cathartic aspect of this laughter,

> Es … una risa que destierra todo el miedo de la noche anterior y que por puro contagio vence la vergüenza y la melancolía del Caballero de la Triste Figura de modo que éste, a pesar de sí mismo, tiene que rendirse. Esta doble risa se genera en las miradas mutuas de los personajes, y en su comprensión de la incongruencia

> entre las emociones de la noche y la realidad de la mañana (“*Los primeros movimientos*”, 204-205).

As noted here, the shared laugher is in response to both the absurdity of the situation *and* the intense stress and fear that they had experienced the night before. We recall that the two characters have been up against ghastly, nocturnal sights and noises since the previous chapter (“La aventura de los encamisados). I believe that this emotional response—one of laughter, of release— is reminiscent of the sentiment that people crave when they attend a horror film. Morris Dickstein, in his essay, "The Aesthetics of Fright" writes,

> Going to horror films is a way of neutralizing anxiety by putting an aesthetic bracket around it. Even the most terrifying nightmare must come to an end; though it may trouble the mind for days afterward, it must be followed by a sense of relief: ‘Thank God it was only a dream!’ … Horror films have some of the same cathartic or purgative effect. They lance and probe our encapsulated fears and drain off feelings we didn't even know we had (69).[85]

In this way, the scene of co-laughing functions as a very particular form of comic relief for the characters: it is a way to process and overcome the psychological strain of the night before.

[85] Dickstein's "The Aesthetics of Fright" is an instrumental text in understanding the theory of horror. He writes, “Fear and desire are our most primitive impulses, both ridiculously easy to arouse—few props are necessary to draw us in.” (69)

This brief moment of "laughing across"[86] quickly shifts to Sancho laughing *down* his master. He oversteps in his dramatic fits of laughing, and takes it even further in his mockery, "de lo cual ya se daba al diablo don Quijote, y más cuando le oyó decir, como por modo de fisga: —«Has de saber, ¡oh Sancho amigo!, que yo nací por querer del cielo en esta nuestra edad de hierro para resucitar en ella la dorada, o de oro. Yo soy aquel para quien están guardados los peligros, las hazañas grandes, los valerosos fechos...»" (I, 20: 239). Sancho's parody of Quijote's initial response to the noises the night before is both humiliating and frustrating, for it snaps them immediately back to reality. Murillo writes, "Sancho's laughter reduces to mockery any possibility of enchantments to explain reality away" (*Critical Introduction,* 69). A combination of auditory experiences here—Sancho's overdone bouts of laughter and his mockery—ultimately compound Quijote's shame, which manifests itself in a final violent reaction. This moment highlights the growing tension between them and Quijote's inability to tolerate the (sonic) chaos surrounding him.

Sancho apologizes, insisting he was merely joking, but maintains that their experience is worthy of laughter and storytelling. Quijote responds, "No niego yo… que lo que nos ha sucedido no sea cosa digna de risa, pero no es digna de contarse, que no son todas las personas tan discretas, que sepan poner en su punto las cosas" (I, 20: 240-241). This retort prompts a question: can storytelling be understood as a form of noise, an auditory force that cannot be controlled by the characters? While Quijote seeks to censure the episode, Sancho's impulse to tell it threatens this authority. We recall that noise and

[86] Paul Michael Johnson defines 'laughing across' as "an intersubjective, empathetic laughter" (103). Johnson discusses Sancho's laughter extensively in his book, *Affective Geographies: Cervantes, Emotion, and the Literary Mediterranean*.

fame are connected through terms such as *estruendo* and *hacer ruido*, both of which can signify grandeur and admiration, yet also inherently carry the risk of distortion and infamy.[87] This duality frames noise as an uncontrollable entity shaped by public perception. The danger lies in its unmanageable spread; Quijote is concerned with a loss of power over how their story will be received. This potential transition reveals a struggle between narrative authority and unpredictability: both storytelling and noise and can act as unruly forces that resist control. Whether through the pounding of the fulling mill or gossip spun in the rumor mill, noise is portrayed as an unstoppable force that keeps the machinery of chaos well-oiled.

In a similar vein, Sancho's act of speaking disrupts the expected balance between speech and silence in the dynamic between master and squire. Quijote warns Sancho to check his excessive conversation, "y está advertido de aquí adelante en una cosa, para que te abstengas y reportes en el hablar demasiado conmigo, que en cuantos libros de caballerías he leído, que son infinitos, jamás he hallado que ningún escudero hablase tanto con su señor como tú con el tuyo" (I, 20: 241). Sancho speaking too much is seen as an act of disrespect; Quijote gives the example of a respectable squire who "que fue tan callado, que, para declararnos *la excelencia de su maravilloso silencio*, sola una vez se nombra su nombre en toda aquella tan grande como verdadera historia" (I, 20: 241-242, my emphasis). Here, Quijote describes silence as "maravilloso", in stark contrast to his previous description of the silence of the night as "estraño", which reflect the changing and

[87] Avilés cites an important quote from Hillel Schwartz to support this concept, "la fama es 'the "noise" a person made in the world, for better or worse'" (*No al concertado son, sino al ruido,* 442). This dynamic of fame/making noise in equally seen in the definition of *Hacerse famoso o memorable*: "Alcanzar nombre por algunos hechos memorábles y heróicos: y *tambien por cometer delítos que hacen ruido*" (II, 118, my emphasis).

subjective role of (the lack of) sound depending on the context. His critique of Sancho's chatter emphasizes the tension between speaking and remaining quiet, where silence is idealized as a marker of loyalty and respect. This example falls in line with Alan S. Trueblood's argument in his essay "El silencio en el Quijote," which posits that silence is not merely a passive absence of sound but rather a dynamic element that shapes the novel's intricate structure, themes, and character development.[88]

Sancho's speech functions as noise here—disruptive, unwanted, and rejected by Quijote. Yet, as seen throughout the novel, Sancho's conversation cannot be fully silenced; it is essential to both his character and his role in the narrative. His persistent chatter, framed by Quijote as a defiance of the squire-knight code, reflects the tension between sound and silence in their dynamic and highlights the evolving dimensions of their relationship.

In response, Sancho agrees to abide by the expected norms of a squire's silence: "Mas bien puede estar seguro que de aquí adelante no despliegue mis labios para hacer donaire de las cosas de vuestra merced, si no fuere para honrarle, como a mi amo y señor natural" (I, 20: 241). As we might predict, this is a short-lived promise; Sancho almost immediately gets in a jab at Quijote in the following chapter when Don Quijote eyes his next conquest, *el yelmo de Mambrino*, "mas quiera Dios, torno a decir, que orégano sea y no batanes" (I, 21: 244). Quijote retorts with a final threat,

[88] "No sólo refuerzan (el sonido y el silencio) la fundamental estructura antitética de la novela, sino que se aplican en forma sutil y matizada en varias zonas secundarias. Como otros elementos estéticos e ideológicos, son aprovechados con intención cada vez más clara y consciente por Cervantes a medida que lleva adelante la obra" (176).

Ya os he dicho, hermano, que no me mentéis ni por pienso más eso de los batanes —dijo don Quijote—, que voto, y no digo más, que os batanee el alma.

Calló Sancho, con temor que su amo no cumpliese el voto que le había echado, redondo como una bola." (I, 21: 244-45)

Sancho's final moment of fear in this adventure stems not from an external sound but rather from the potential consequences should he utter a noise himself.[89]

Conclusion: Noise as a Catalyst of Fear and Wonder

"La aventura de los batanes", presents a prime opportunity to examine the transformative power of sound and noise, honing in on uncertainty's ability to elicit fear and spark imagination. By anchoring my analysis in the theory of acousmatic sound and noise, this chapter reveals the episode's thematic, structural, and character-driven intricacies. Sound emerges not as a mere backdrop, but as an active, narrative force that blurs the boundaries between perception and reality, deepens emotional complexity, and drives character actions and responses.

One of the primary functions of sound in this chapter is its capacity to expand the personalities of the protagonists. Don Quijote's auditory imagination transforms

[89] The unease from the previous night persists into Chapter 21, as both Don Quijote and Sancho have such strong feelings towards the batanes that they refuse to even glance at them as they drink from the stream, *"sin volver la cara a mirallos [batanes]: tal era el aborrecimiento que les tenían por el miedo en que les habían puesto"* (I, 21: 249). While Don Quijote presses forward, Sancho remains wary, vowing to avoid danger: *"pienso guardarme con todos mis cinco sentidos de ser ferido ni de ferir a nadie"* (I, 21: 247). Despite his pledge to stay silent, Sancho soon returns to his talkative nature, asking for permission to speak: *"Que después que me puso aquel áspero mandamiento del silencio se me han podrido más de cuatro cosas en el estómago,* y una sola que ahora tengo en el pico de la lengua no querría que se mal lograse*"* (I, 21: 249). The imagery of things "rotting in his stomach" implies that he experiences speaking as a kind of a release, and that holding back his thoughts is almost physically unbearable.

ambiguous noises into heroic opportunity, reinforcing his chivalric ideals and resilience in the face of uncertainty. In contrast, Sancho Panza's reactions—marked by fear, practicality, and self-preservation—reveal a grounded, yet deeply human response to the unknown. Their contrasting emotional states demonstrate how Cervantes uses sound and noise as tools for characterization, shaping their psychological depth.

Sound and noise also define spatial and sensory perception within the narrative. The nocturnal setting elevates hearing as the dominant sense, with the disorienting noises overwhelmingly defining the space. Cervantes crafts a liminal soundscape, where darkness and ambiguity heighten the characters' sense of vulnerability. This liminality—situating the characters between fear and wonder, danger and adventure—parallels their internal struggles and emotional journeys.

These intersections reflect Edmund Burke's concept of the sublime as an aesthetic experience that elicits both terror and awe, often through vast, undefined, and overwhelming sensory experiences. His description of excessive loudness as something that "overpowers the soul, suspends action, and fills it with terror" (75) resonates with the way the thundering *batanes* create an atmosphere of uncertainty and dread. The fulling mills, though ultimately ordinary, provoke a moment of sublime disorientation, in which Don Quijote is confronted with a force that exceeds his understanding. His response—to frame the unknown noise as an adventure rather than a threat—demonstrates his instinct to reframe terror as inspiration.

Freud's concept of the uncanny offers another potential lens to examine the soundscape of this episode. The uncanny arises when something both familiar and

strange—recognizable and deeply unsettling—disrupts one's perception of reality. In this episode, sound acts as an uncanny presence; though mundane in origin, the hammering noises acquire an eerie quality in the absence of visual confirmation. Their acousmatic nature fosters this effect: until the source is revealed, the sounds exist in an ambiguous space. Sancho experiences this as a paralyzing fear, while Don Quijote interprets it as an invitation to adventure. While this chapter has not directly engaged the frameworks of the sublime and uncanny, they offer compelling avenues for further exploration.

Fear and wonder—the connecting thread between liminality, the uncanny, and the sublime— reinforce the novel's broader exploration of reality and illusion. Isabella van Elferen, in her exploration of Gothic soundscapes, argues that the connection between fear and desire "forms a dynamic that propels the narrative, as sound heightens the ambiguity between dream, fantasy, and reality" (7). Thus, the acoustic expands interpretive possibilities, destabilizes fixed meanings, and introduces new pathways for narrative and character development. Whether through terror or humor, Cervantes highlights the fragility of the boundary between reality and imagination, showing how sound shapes human experience.

Furthermore, noise generates tension, not only between Don Quijote and Sancho but also within each character. For Sancho, the clash between his fear and loyalty to Don Quijote pushes him to discourage the adventure and later leads to noisy bodily functions that offend his *amo*. For Quijote, the noise challenges his resolve, forcing him to reaffirm his knightly identity. These tensions enrich the narrative, positioning noise as a catalyst for conflict and character development. Thus, it underscores the survival instincts of the

characters, revealing their contrasting approaches to self-preservation. Sancho listens, while Quijote acts; Sancho is risk-averse, while Quijote is risk-seeking. Sancho's practical, often humorous strategies to mitigate danger contrast sharply with Quijote's idealistic embrace of peril. This duality reinforces the relationship between fear and desire, as noise both threatens and inspires.

This chapter has also traced sound's narrative trajectory, transitioning from acousmatic sound—the disembodied and mysterious noises of the fulling mills—to the eventual revelation of their mundane source. This structural progression mirrors the episode's arc, as fear and uncertainty give way to anticlimactic humor. Yet, even in the light of day, the episode does not fully resolve itself. Sancho's continued jokes, Quijote's lingering shame, and the echoes of the previous night's terror preserve a sense of unease, highlighting noise's enduring ability to unsettle even after its source is revealed. The movement from auditory ambiguity to visual certainty mirrors a broader theme in the novel; the anticlimactic revelation of the fulling hammers is less a resolution than a commentary on perception itself.

Ultimately, *La aventura de los batanes* reveals noise as a liminal force, one that disorients and unsettles, yet simultaneously opens new narrative and emotional dimensions. Cervantes employs noise to blur the boundaries between fear and wonder, reality and illusion. By foregrounding the sonic experience in this episode, he challenges the reliability of perception and underscores the role of imagination in navigating the unknown. In analyzing this episode through the lens of acousmatic sound and noise, this chapter demonstrates how Cervantes uses auditory elements to shape meaning, deepen characterization, and challenge perception. "La aventura de los batanes" exemplifies how

noise functions as a driving force in *Don Quijote*, transforming the narrative's structure and expanding its interpretive possibilities.

CHAPTER 3

Subversive Noise and Music in *El celoso extremeño*

Lope de Vega's most famous *comedia, Fuente Ovejuna,* is a remarkably noisy work. Between the musical celebrations of the Comendador's men, the interrupted wedding of Laurencia and Frondoso, the screams of the assaulted women, and the pain-filled screeches of the tortured characters, Lope de Vega was no doubt aware of the acoustic elements implied in a town living under the cruel grip of a tyrant.[90] We as readers must use our imagination in order to appreciate the sonic dimensionality of the play, something that was readily available to the audience who attended the performance in a *corral*.[91] In the final act of the play, the villagers resolve to rise up against the Comendador, leading to the culmination of the play: the siege of his house. Flores and the Comendador hear a commotion outside:

Flores: Grande ruido suena.

Ruido suene

Comendador: ¿Ruido?

Flores: Y de manera que interrompen

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[90] More generally, Lope de Vega was surely in tune to the fact that sonic aspects of the production of theatre are just as, if not more, important than its *mise en scène.* In the final three lines of *Arte nuevo de hacer comedias*, Lope echoes Aristotle (see *On Sense and the Sensible*, 2) by drawing a connection between hearing and knowledge: *Oye atento, y del arte no disputes, / que en la comedia se hallará modo / que, oyéndola, se pueda saber todo* (vv. 387-9).

[91] The auditory was as equally, if not more important, than the visual in early modern Spanish theatre, which stems from the tradition of oral and popular literature: the 17th century sits at the junction between literature that was heard and written. José María Díez Borque notes that "el público [del teatro] iba más a oir que a ver, con unas posibilidades imaginativas y una estética de la palabra quizás hoy perdidas—y que, a mi ver, hay que poner en relación con toda una tradición de literatura oral popular en todos los niveles sociales" (30). For a deep dive into the auditory and the theatre, see John G. Weiger (1978).

tu justicia, señor.

Ortuño: ¡Las puertas rompen!

Ruido.

(III. 1852-5)

This "ruido", as silent as it rings when read from the pages of the *comedia,* is an all-encompassing term that represents the multitude of noises of the rebellion: drums, chanting, cries of frustration, marching, stamping feet, and repeated shouts: "Qué muere la tirania!". Rather than causing chaos, this *ruido* responds to it. The villagers' clamor echoes the disturbances previously inflicted by the Comendador; the true disruption began with his tyranny, and the uprising offers it a noisy reckoning. The use of the term "interrompen"[92] implies both auditory interruption and a broader destabilization of imposed justice. Here, "ruido" functions dually as a political act—as literal clamor and metaphorical disruption. The Comendador's interrogative response—"¿Ruido?"—signals disorientation, an inability to process that justice is not being contested with reason, but with uprise and sound. Therefore, it follows that both the terms "justicia" and "ruido" have multiple implications in this scene: not only does the noise born out of the invasion quite literally interrupt the exchanges between the Comendador and Frondoso, but it also metaphorically disrupts his *in*justice imposed on the townspeople.[93]

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[92] Flores' use of a modified third-person plural form of the verb "interrumpir" may imply that Lope does not refer to the *ruido* itself that does the interrupting, but rather to the attackers (plural). I am led to believe that the use of the plural form was simply a stylistic choice on the part of the author to keep the rhyme with following "rompen". We also recall the connection between noise and rupture as discussed in Chapter 1.

[93] The effect of this subversion is most poignantly illustrated in the dying words of the commander at the hands of the attackers. The townspeople repeatedly cry out: "¡Fuente Ovejuna! ¡Viva el rey Fernando! / ¡Mueran malos cristianos y traidores!", to which the commander replies, "¿No me queréis oir? Yo estoy hablando, / ¡Yo soy vuestro señor! (vv. 1883-4). Hearing, sound, and silence are crucial in illustrating the

The present chapter turns to *El celoso extremeño*, Cervantes' seventh *novela ejemplar*. While *Fuente Ovejuna* presents noise as a collective, public act of resistance, *El celoso extremeño* translates sonic subversion to the private sphere, where music becomes a vehicle of seduction and deception. Loaysa, the infiltrator, uses the guitar as an instrument of charm, destabilizing the strict sonic and moral order imposed by Felipo Carrizales. In the story, Cervantes constructs music and noise as active agents of transformation and rebellion. Drawing on the theoretical frameworks of Jacques Attali, Ted Gioia, and Christopher Partridge, this chapter shows how the *novela* uses sonic elements to disrupt power structures, manipulate perception, and create chaos.

If "El episodio de los batanes" is considered Cervantes' noisiest chapter in *Don Quijote,* then *El celoso extremeño* should be correspondingly crowned the *novela ejemplar* with the most references to the auditory. Similarly set in a nighttime environment, the *novela* tells the story of an exceptionally jealous man who buys a house in Seville and fills it with maids and slaves in charge of guarding and protecting his wife in an attempt to keep her hidden from the outside world. From the beginning of the story, Carrizales seeks to suppress all contact with the city around him, constructing a fortress of sensory deprivation. This initial stage of the story foregrounds a space stripped of external stimuli, one that Loaysa will progressively undermine through the disruptive force of sound and music.

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shift in power in the rebellion: the townspeople, once forced to listen to the Comendador and living in fear of speaking out, now hold control of the situation: they freely cry out against his tyranny, and it is the Comendador who is silenced. As the Comendador asks "No me queréis oir?...", it is already apparent that he, in that moment, has been stripped of his title of "vuestro señor" even before his demise.

Loaysa, a *virote,* takes up music as his chosen weapon to infiltrate the fortress and seduces and convinces Luis, a Black eunuch porter, to aid him in his conquest. Loaysa's slow, meticulous entry into the *fortaleza* is riddled with a constant stream of acoustic references, both to the tone of his guitar and Luis' voice. Later, when Loaysa enters the house, the success of the prohibited concert rides on the condition that Carrizales remains asleep, revealing an intricate relationship between noise—the snores of their *amo*— and silence—the lack of indications of his awakening. Cervantes takes this opportunity, on the one hand, to illustrate acoustic subjectivity by interchanging traditional perceptions of noise and music. On the other, the celebration is simultaneously dependent on the delicate balance between the intensity of music and production of noise that ultimately unravels, disintegrating into a notably noisy and chaotic scene.

In particular, music, noise, and silence form part of a three-way acoustic dance central to the deception of Carrizales in different phases of the story. My analysis highlights three fundamental sonic aspects: the seductive, subversive qualities of music played by Loaysa, the interplay between noise and silence upon his entrance into the house, and the remarkably noisy spectacle of singing and dancing at the climax of the story. In particular, my analysis will trace three fundamental aspects: the music used by Loaysa to penetrate the house, the coexistence of noise and silence in the house during the deception of Carrizales, and the dissonance in the remarkably noisy spectacle of singing and dancing. In this regard, I explore how Cervantes represents music and noise in the *novela*, and how they form structuring elements of the story.

Noise and Music as Subversion

On August 29, 1952, David Tudor offered the first performance of one of the most controversial pieces in the history of modern music: John Cage's *4'33".* At a small concert hall in Woodstock, New York, the musician entered the concert hall, sat at his piano, adjusted his sheet music, and proceeded to decisively shut the fallboard and start his pocket watch. There he sat for exactly four minutes and thirty-three seconds, not striking a single key. According to Tudor, the audience was "incensed"; "in an uproar" after the performance.[94] Cage, on the other hand, reported that they "missed the point". His intention, of course, was to explore and present a "music" composed not of notes but of, in his words, "accidental sounds": the ambient noises of the room: scattered coughs, the shuffling of feet, confused whispers, and the creaking of seats. Cage's work effectively collapsed the distinction between music and noise, transforming unwanted background hum—dismissed as mere noise— into legitimate and generative sonic material, capable of constituting music. Nowadays, if you cue up 4'33' on Spotify, you indeed hear a *conceptually* similar 'music' to what was heard in that auditorium over 70 years ago. In its lack of 'musical' sounds, the piece converts each listener's space into its own unrepeatable composition.[95]

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[94] See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HypmW4Yd7SY&ab_channel=pezzipez

[95] Cage writes, regarding 4'33", "Nevertheless, we must bring about a music which is like furniture—a music, that is, which will be part of the noises of the environment, will take them into consideration. I think of it as melodious, softening the noises of the knives and forks, not dominating them, not imposing itself. It would fill up those heavy silences that sometimes fall between friends dining together. It would spare them the trouble of paying attention to their own banal remarks. And at the same time it would neutralize the street noises which so indiscreetly enter into the play of conversation. To make such music would be to respond to a need" (qtd. in Attali 112).

Above all, Cage's infamous representation of music in 4'33' prompts a reflection on its relationship with noise. Jacques Attali, in *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*, reflects on Cage's "radical silence",

> When Cage opens the door to the concert hall to let the noise of street in, he is regenerating all of music: he is taking it to its culmination. He is blaspheming, criticizing the code and the network. When he sits motionless at the piano for four minutes and thirty-three seconds, letting the audience grow impatient and make noises, he is giving back the right to speak to people who do no(t) want to have it. He is announcing the disappearance of the commercial site of music: music is to be produced not in a temple, not in a hall, not at home, but everywhere; it is to be produced everywhere it is possible to produce it, in whatever way it is wished, by anyone who wants to enjoy it. (136)

In a related vein, we recall from Chapter 1 Paul Hegarty's comment on the subjective relationship between noise and music, who writes, "Noise itself constantly dissipates…. what is judged noise at one point is music or meaning at another" (ix). Alex Ross echoes this sentiment in his work *The Rest Is Noise: Listening to the Twentieth Century. He writes,*

> Twentieth-century classical composition, the subject of this book, sounds like noise to many… Yet these sounds are hardly alien. Atonal chords crop up in jazz; avant-garde sounds appear in Hollywood film scores; minimalism has marked rock, pop, and dance music from the Velvet Underground onward. Sometimes the music resembles noise because it is noise, or near to it, by design (xvi).

Similarly to Cage, Ross questions the boundaries between noise and music. Interestingly, Ted Gioia, in his book *Music: A Subversive History,* argues that the first system of tuning and scales in the Western World was in fact created out of noise. Such goes the tale that the "alleged innovator", Pythagoras, heard the sounds of blacksmiths hammering their anvils, prompting him to consider the "mathematical rules that might explain both the differing tones and their pleasing or displeasing qualities" (53). Thus, writes Gioia, he "literally transformed noise—the marketplace hammers—into music, a stunning achievement" (53).

Attali expands upon the idea that music originates from noise, emphasizing that music continually generates conditions for its own subversion, transforming into noise within evolving contexts:

> Parallel to mathematics, upon which musical codes are always very dependent, music evolved toward a pure syntax. For example, giant musical compositions were theorized when Fourier, then Helmholtz, decomposed sounds into infinite series of pure harmonic tones… But in spite of that, music even today contains innumerable forms that cannot be expressed in mathematics: dissonance, the mixture of order and disorder, syncopation, sudden change, harmonic redundancy. Each network pushes its organization to the extreme, to the point where it creates the internal conditions for its own rupture, its own noises. *What is noise to the old order is harmony to the new* (34-35, my emphasis).[96]

[96] For a deep dive into this in the context of noise/music in the 20th century, see Alex Ross, "*The Rest Is Noise: Listening to the Twentieth Century*". Ross writes, "Ultimately, all music acts on its audience through the same physics of sound, shaking the air and arousing curious sensations. In the twentieth century, however, musical life disintegrated into a teeming mass of cultures and subcultures, each with its own canon and jargon. Some genres have attained more popularity than others; none has true mass appeal. What delights one group gives headaches to another. Hip-hop tracks thrill teenagers and horrify their parents" (xv). John Cage echoes this in

In Chapter 2, I established a theoretical framework for understanding sound and noise as inherently unstable phenomena: an intrusive, overwhelming force that capitalizes on a hearer's passivity and vulnerability. In particular, I explored acousmatic sound and noise in the context of imagination, in line with Jacques Attali's conceptualization of noise as a site of potential and generator of new forms of meaning. Building on these foundations, the present chapter turns more explicitly to the subversive potential of noise and music.

As impossible-to-define as the relationship between noise and music may be, Jacques Attali and Ted Gioia link the two through one clear tie: subversion. On one hand, noise can be defined as interference with a message in transmission or a disruption. As seen with Fray Luis de León, noise can act as distraction, or a polluter of a desired system. Yet, Attali reminds us that the very act of interruption carries new information; the presence of noise, "makes sense, makes meaning. It makes possible the creation of a new order on another level of organization, of a new code in another network" (33). This means that disruption is not merely destructive, but it is generative, allowing for new cultural and communicative systems to emerge, as Attali calls them, "necessary condition(s) for real creativity" (122). Thus, as explored in Chapter 2, noise signifies a rupture within existing communication systems, presenting not mere chaos but rather an auditory ambiguity that prompts the emergence of new societal codes and relations.

Viewed this way, noise becomes a process that can resist and/or transform social order. Moreover, it is an act of rebellion against the imposition of silence—a force of

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Silence, "'Sound come into its own.' What does that mean? For one thing: it means that noises are as useful to new music as so-called musical tones, for the simple reason that they are sounds. This decision alters the view of history, so that one is no longer concerned with tonality or atonality" (68-69).

power—, with the ability to destabilize established boundaries. Attali writes, "More than colors and forms, it is sounds and their arrangements that fashion societies. With noise is born disorder and its opposite: the world. With music is born power and its opposite: subversion" (6). In this quote, Attali emphasizes that both noise and music have a dual and seemingly contradictory nature. Noise is linked to disorder *and* creation, and music is connected to suppression *and* subversion. Let's first consider music's dual nature. Attali explains this in what he calls the "three strategic uses of music by power". Music, in the case of authority, is used:

> in an attempt to make people *forget* the general violence; in another, it is employed to make people *believe* in the harmony of the world, that there is order in exchange and legitimacy in commercial power; and finally, there is one in which it serves to *silence,* by mass-producing a deafening, syncretic kind of music, and censoring all other human noises (19, emphasis in original).

In a similar vein, Ted Gioia discusses this idea in the context of classical music. While once associated with refinement, it has also been also used to assert social and spatial dominance. He presents the example of a manager of 7-Eleven, who in the year 1985 started playing composers like Mozart and Beethoven to drive away loiterers and panhandlers. The tactic spread to law enforcement, who found that classical music effectively cleared public areas of "unwanted parties". The "strangest example", according to Gioia, was the testing of a Tesla car alarm system that blasts Bach to deter thieves (24-25). In addition, Attali underscores the political necessity of controlling subversive noise, asserting that authoritarian regimes censor such noise because it symbolizes calls for

autonomy. The political dimension of noise control reflects a broader repression of new languages and social codes, highlighting the cultural stakes in noise as both disruption and innovation (7).

In contrast, Attali presents music as subversion and as a counterforce to control, where it anticipates and undermines,

> When power wants to make people *forget*, music is ritual *sacrifice*, the scapegoat; when it wants them to *believe*, music is enactment, *representation*; when it wants to *silence* them, it is reproduced, normalized, *repetition*. Thus it heralds the subversion of both the existing code and the power in the making, well before the latter is in place (20, emphasis in original).

Thus, music, used to silence or control in a position of power, can also be used to fight back, as a "liberating mode of production". In other words, in response to these systems of control, argues Attali, arises subversive music and noise to overthrow them. Later, he again blurs the line between noise and music, making two central claims:

> First, … *noise is violence*: it disturbs. To make noise is to interrupt a transmission, to disconnect, to kill. It is a simulacrum of murder.
> Second, … *music is a channelization of noise*, and therefore a simulacrum of the sacrifice. It is thus a sublimation, an exacerbation of the imaginary, at the same time as the creation of social order and political integration (26, emphasis in original).

The phrasing 'music is a channelization of noise' perhaps offers some clarification into Attali's view of music and noise and how they coexist and interact. This means that

music is seen as either (1) the ordering, or control of noise, or (2) the transformation of noise into something meaningful or powerful that in turn subverts those same systems of control. Paul Hegarty sums this up in another way, “noise is a process... whether it creates a result (positive in the form of an avant-garde transformation, negative in the form of social restrictions) or remains process is one of the major issues in how music and noise relate” (5). In short, music is presented as a highly dynamic force where societal power structures are simultaneously reinforced and challenged. Subversion is driven by music's intrinsic connection to noise, its capacity to disrupt established codes, and its origin in the expressions of marginalized or rebellious groups. While the dominant order attempts to control and silence these subversive sounds, music, through its ongoing innovation and relationship with noise, consistently anticipates and participates in the transformation of societal codes and relations. Both Attali and Gioia note this as a historical pattern; Attali writing, “Subversion in musical production opposes a new syntax to the existing syntax, from the point of view of which it is noise. Transitions of this kind have been occurring in music since antiquity and have led to the creation of new codes within changing networks” (34).

Gioia echoes the paradox of music’s disruptive and regenerative power. In fact, he does so early on in his book, in the introductory paragraph of the first chapter:

> I’m not surprised the whole thing started with a huge bang, not just a big downbeat in bar one, but the biggest one of them all. How fitting that this initial pulse of rhythm came as part of an explosion both destructive and creative. That’s a symbol for all the later musical outbursts charted in these pages, those unruly sounds that

> shatter the existing order, cause turbulence and even chaos, only gradually coalescing into a new stability (9).

From the sounds of nature to contemporary popular forms, music functions as what he calls a "force of creative destruction". Tracing it from a historic perspective, Gioia emphasizes music's origins in marginalized and disruptive domains like sex, violence, and magic: clear central elements in music. Similarly, he proposes that musical innovation arises primarily from social margins: among the rebels, outcasts, and slaves. Gioia too identifies a recurring historical pattern in which new musical forms initially provoke resistance and censorship from dominant power structures, only later to be assimilated, normalized, and later heralded by mainstream culture, perpetuating a cycle of musical revolution.[97] This dynamic effectively reveals the tension between music's innate subversive capacity and the institutional efforts to contain and suppress it.

Especially of interest to the study of Loaysa's use of music in the *novela* at hand, Gioia discusses "Orphic thought", the idea that music possesses an innate, powerful magic. Gioia argues that the biological and social effects of music—such as fostering group cohesion and trust through hormonal responses—make music a potent social and political tool, something clearly seen in the story. Additionally, to return to the concept of sound as invasive, we are reminded of music's particular propensity to transgress and destabilize borders and fixed spaces. Isabella van Elferen, in *Gothic Music: The Sounds of the Uncanny*, quotes Simon Frith to illustrate this, "Music … defines a space without boundaries (a game

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[97] Christopher Partridge, in *The Lyre of Orpheus: Popular Music, the Sacred, and the Profane*, argues this point as well. I return to Partridge later in my discussion of Loaysa as an Orphic figure.

without frontiers). Music is thus the cultural form best able both to cross borders … We are only where the music takes us" (qtd. in van Elferen 7).

Building on this framework, I now turn to *El celoso extremeño*, where sound, noise, and its absence become a battleground between power and defiance. In the story, Loaysa's music functions as disruptive noise, challenging the silence and control imposed by Carrizales. In this chapter, I consider the following research questions: How can the music in this work be considered an act of rebellion? How is the closed space of the house destabilized, and how are music and noise distinguished, or represented together? How do power—embodied by Carrizales—and subversion—personified by Loaysa—interact? What happens to characters who are unable to access sound? What is the significance of musical ecstasy or trance in the *novela's* scenes of performance and chaos? How do the story's final silences—those of Carrizales, Leonora's parents, and Leonora herself—play into the earlier sonic crescendo of the story?

La fortaleza as Visual and Auditory(?) Control

Returning to Spain after having earned a fortune in *las indias*, an old man named Felipo de Carrizales decides to marry one day when he sees in a window "puesta una doncella, al parecer de trece o catorce años" (Cervantes 102). The old man, reputed to be "el hombre más celoso del mundo (102)", formulates a plan to isolate Leonora and preserve her honor, "Casarse he con ella; encerraréla y haréla a mis manas, y con esto no tendrá otra condición que aquella que yo le ensenaré" (102).[98] He buys a secluded house

[98] *All citations of El celoso extremeño are taken from Miguel de Cervantes, Novelas ejemplares II, ed. Jorge García López (Barcelona: Editorial Crítica, 2001).*

and fills it with maids and slaves in charge of the guard and surveillance of his new wife. In the context of the senses, the control of vision is the most obvious one in the construction of the *fortaleza*. The narrator notes that Carrizales "cerró todas las ventanas que miraban a la calle, y diólas vista al cielo, y lo mismo hizo de todas las otras de casa" (103), and "levantó las paredes de las azuteas de tal manera que el que entraba en la casa había de mirar al cielo por línea recta, sin que pudiesen ver otra cosa" (104). Sergio Fabián Vita, in his article "El espacio mítico en la novela de *El celoso extremeño*", describes it as an artificial space for confinement, "una casa ciega" where vision is restricted and vertical. He interprets the space symbolically, seeing it as a representation of darkness, ignorance, and sterility, even likening it to the underworld or Hades, with Carrizales as a lord of this closed, exclusive world. Similarly, Luis Avilés, in his article, "*Fortaleza tan guardada*: Casa, alegoría y melancolía en *El celoso extremeño",* argues that the domestic space is simultaneously a metaphorical tomb, prison, monastery and fortress, each institution marked by confinement, discipline, and patriarchal control (80).[99]

While the carefully constructed hermetic space is physically and visually guarded, it should also be noted that is also sonically censored, in a way. The narrator paints an exaggerated picture of the house's purity and order,

[99] Avilés expands upon this article in his book *Avatares de lo invisible: espacio y subjetividad en los Siglo de Oro*, arguing that Carrizales's compulsive need for control, rooted in his psychological insecurity and pathological jealousy, leads him to conceive of the home not as a space of intimacy or community but as an armored chamber of isolation, "víctima de su inseguridad y sus tensiones, modela la casa siguiendo no tan solo el patrón de su psicología personal, sino también los dictámenes sociales y culturales que se le han impuesto y con los cuales no puede negociar. La necesidad extrema de seguridad personal de este hombre encantado ha convertido a la casa en un enigma, en una fortaleza erigida en contra de cualquier penetración curiosa" (208). Thus, the sealed house, with its closed windows and guarded thresholds, is but a material projection of Carrizales's inner fragility: an architectural manifestation of his inability to live with uncertainty.

> A los ratones della jamás los persiguió gato, ni en ella se oyó ladrido de perro: todos eran del género femenino… Jamás entró hombre de la puerta adentro del patio. Con sus amigos negociaba en la calle… Toda su casa olía a honestidad, recogimiento y recato: aun hasta en las consejas que en las largas noches del invierno en la chimenea sus criadas contaban, por estar él presente, en ningún género de lascivia se descubría (106).

An all-female staff—besides Luis, a eunuch whose voice is notably described as "atiplada"[100]—, Carrizales' absolute refusal to let any man into the space, and even his censorships of stories that may be considered risqué all contribute to this sense of auditory cleansing. Carrizales clearly views any external masculine sound as noise, and it is remarkably absent until Loaysa's arrival.

Yet, while the house may be a hermetic, tightly closed space, it is ultimately sound-permeable. We are reminded of sound and noise's particular propensity to transgress boundaries: for example, in Chapter 2, I discussed Mladen Dolar's concept of the vulnerability of the listener, "The ears have no lids…. they cannot be closed, one is constantly exposed, no distance from sound can be maintained" (78). While in that chapter I discussed the difficulty of avoiding unwanted noise, quite the opposite happens in *El celoso extremeño.* The occupants of the house are desperate for any sort of external sound, as they exclaim later, "ni aun el canto de los pájaros habemos oído" (114). This sonic deprivation underscores the house's vulnerability—not in its walls, but in its permeability

[100] Paul Michael Johnson discusses the characterization of Luis in depth in his forthcoming article, "Cervantes's Black Castrato and the Racial Politics of Timbre". I return to the article in my own discussions of the interactions between Loaysa and Luis.

to sound, which will be capitalized on by Loaysa and his guitar. Paul Michael Johnson, in his forthcoming article, “Cervantes’s Black Castrato and the Racial Politics of Timbre”, discusses this in the context of the *novela*,

> Unlike sight, sound does not require a direct line to be apprehended; acousmatic, it boasts the advantage – and, in this case, the danger – of passing through walls. Loaysa appeals to the acoustic realm not just because he is adept at music and because this talent will serve to ingratiate himself among the servants whose aid is indispensable for gaining entry to the home, but because in essence hearing is the only practical sense available for doing so (5).

The narrator notes the temporary success of Carrizales’ fortification, “todo lo cual era de grandísima satisfación para el celoso marido, pareciéndole que había acertado a escoger la vida mejor que se la supo imaginar, y que por ninguna vía la industria ni la malicia humana podía perturbar su sosiego” (105). Carrizales’ *sosiego* is quite different than the sense of freedom that Fray Luis expresses in “Vida retirada”; it is not the tranquil result of spiritual withdrawal, but rather a tense and fragile illusion of control—manufactured through isolation and surveillance. His peace depends not on inner retreat but on the active silencing of external forces, revealing a fear-driven attempt to master the senses.

The term “perturbar”, a key word in the story, is repeated a few lines later. The narrator notes that Carrizales and the inhabitants, “Desta manera pasaron un año de noviciado y hicieron profesión en aquella vida, determinándose de llevarla hasta el fin de las suyas: y así fuera si *el sagaz perturbador del género humano* no lo estorbara, como ahora

oiréis" (106, my emphasis).[101] A "perturbador", according to *Autoridades,* is one who causes "perturbación" or "inquietúd", the former defined as "Revolución del orden o concierto de alguna cosa, o del estado de quietúd en que se hallaba. Usase en lo physico y en lo moral" (III, 238). The phrases "la malicia humana" and "el sagaz perturbador del género humano" echo Attali and Gioia's arguments: systems are created to be subverted, walls are built to be breached, and noise and music stand out as the vectors of disruption. As Attali writes, catastrophe is inscribed in order, and vice-versa: "There is no order that does not contain disorder within itself, and undoubtedly there is no disorder incapable of creating order" (34). Despite Carrizales's obsessive efforts at control, he ultimately falls victim to the world's intrinsic instability. The narrator observes, "No se vio monasterio tan cerrado, ni monjas más recogidas, ni manzanas de oro tan guardadas; y con todo esto, no pudo en ninguna manera prevenir ni escusar de caer en lo que recelaba; a lo menos, en pensar que había caído" (106). In this framework, Loaysa becomes not merely a clever seducer but also a figure of subversive musical force; what Attali might call a harbinger of the new order. And, ironically, that new order emerges from within the very structures designed to suppress it: Carrizales's extreme enclosure invites the very disruption he so deeply fears.

Instruments of Seduction and Infiltration

A *virote,* Loaysa, "viéndola siempre cerrada, le tomó gana de saber quien vivía dentro; y, con tanto ahínco y curiosidad hizo la diligencia que de todo vino a saber lo que deseaba" (107). Here, again, curiosity plays a role in driving the story's narrative. Unlike in

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[101] Elena Carrera argues that this is a "veiled reference" to the devil (118).

Don Quijote, where an acousmatic noise sparks investigation or desire for confrontation, Loaysa's curiosity is provoked by a visual block: "todo lo cual le encendió el deseo de ver si sería posible expunar, por fuerza o por industria, fortaleza tan guardada" (107).[102] Loaysa's character is introduced in the following way:

> Hay en Sevilla un género de gente ociosa y holgazana, a quien comúnmente suelen llamar gente de barrio. Éstos son los hijos de vecino de cada colación, y de los más ricos della; gente baldía, atildada y meliflua, de la cual y de su traje y manera de vivir, de su condición y de las leyes que guardan entre sí, había mucho que decir; pero por buenos respectos se deja (106-107).

While perhaps a nod to the story's conclusion, in which characters repeatedly find themselves unable or unwilling to speak, this moment also implicates the narrator in a kind of strategic silence. By withholding information, the narrator invites the reader to speculate and fill in the gaps, signaling that there is something suggestive, or perhaps scandalous, deliberately being left unsaid.

Those from Loaysa's social world are described as "gente baldía, atildada y meliflua", which offers a potential description of Loaysa's voice. According to Covarrubias, *melifluo* refers to "el que habla con dulzura y suavidad" (545). *Autoridades* defines the term

[102] In *El casamiento engañoso*, a visual desire is activated when Campuzano sees a veiled woman enter the posada and sit beside him. Though her face remains hidden, the veil itself, along with her adorned hands, becomes a visual lure: "cosa que me encendió más el deseo de verla" (283). As he observes, the fact that he *cannot* see the face of the woman has an enthralling effect on him; he begs her to reveal her face, and she responds that he may visit her at her house, and she will oblige him. Campuzano continues to reflect on how he was captivated by what was only partially visible: "Yo quedé abrasado con las manos de nieve que había visto, y muerto por el rostro que deseaba ver" (284). This desire provoked by the *unseen* face leads him to her home, where sensory appeal shifts from the visual to the auditory: "No era hermosa en estremo, pero éralo de suerte que podía enamorar comunicada, porque tenía un tono de habla tan suave que se entraba por los oídos en el alma" (284).

as, “lo que tiene miel” and also as, “dulce, suave, delicado y tierno, o en el trato, o en la explicación” (II, 533). This same term appears in *El amante liberal*, where Ricardo laments the allure of his rival Cornelio, whom he describes as “mancebo galán, atildado, de blandas manos y rizos cabellos, de voz meliflua y de amorosas palabras” (I, 143). In both cases, *meliflua* suggests a seductive softness, a voice that charms and disarms. For Loaysa, this *voz meliflua* is the first auditory cue of his seductive power.

Loaysa is also described as a *virote,* which Cervantes notes is a “mozo soltero, que a los recién casados llaman *mantones” (107).* It is perhaps not a coincidence that *virote* has a double meaning, referring to a piercing arrow used to kill rabbits and birds, while also describing “tambien al mozo soltero, ocioso, passeante, y preciado de guapo” (III, 495). This duality captures how Loaysa’s character, while “ocioso, passeante”, also acts like the arrow: stealthy, sharp, and aimed to penetrate the guarded household of Carrizales. Drawing on classical tradition—Orpheus taming beasts or Apollo healing with music—this *virote* becomes a trickster armed with an ancient weapon: a melody.

From here on out, the *novela* revolves around Loaysa's plan to conquer the house.[103] Luis, the guard of the *casapuerta,*[104] personifies the weak link of the fortress, penetrated by Loaysa's methods. The first is a modification of his appearance,

[103] For a deep dive into his plan, see Maurice Molho, “Aproximación al 'Celoso extremeño'", who outlines Loaysa’s “estratagemas y técnicas de seducción”. Similarly, see Elena Carrera, in “Embodied Cognition and Empathy in Miguel de Cervantes’s *El Celoso Extremeño*”, who highlights the “bodily sensations” that Luis expresses during the “seduction” scene in the story.

[104] We recall the description of the *casapuerta*, “En el portal de la calle, que en Sevilla llaman casapuerta, hizo una caballeriza para una mula, y encima della un pajar y apartamiento donde estuviese el que había de curar della, que fue un negro viejo y eunuco; levantó las paredes de las azuteas de tal manera, que el que entraba en la casa había de mirar al cielo por línea recta, sin que pudiesen ver otra cosa; hizo torno que de la casapuerta respondía al patio" (103-104). The *casapuerta* is an important space in the story. Johnson writes, “After Loaysa vanquishes the property’s first line of defense by helping Luis to stealthily immobilize the lock and

> … se puso unos calzones de lienzo limpio y camisa limpia; pero encima se puso unos vestidos tan rotos y remendados, que ningún pobre en toda la ciudad los traía tan astrosos. Quitóse un poco de barba que tenía, cubrióse un ojo con un parche, vendóse una pierna estrechamente, y, arrimándose a dos muletas, se convirtió en un pobre tullido: tal, que el más verdadero estropeado no se le igualaba (107).

Loaysa's modification of his looks prompts questions on why he needs to appear poorer, akin to a beggar. Johnson addresses this performative shift—along with Loaysa's vocal transformation—as part of a broader strategy of "deception, imposture, and ventriloquism" (9). Johnson ponders the same question that I ask in the case of his alteration of his appearance, "yet it is not entirely clear from whom, nor why he goes to such elaborate lengths to do so, particularly since the narrator openly characterizes him as a 'rake (*virote*),' whose racial and economic privilege has entitled him to a carefree lifestyle and would seem rather to preclude the need for discretion of any kind" (10). This makes the disguise all the more curious, given that Luis—the primary person Loaysa aims to deceive—cannot see him when he first approaches the *fortaleza*. On the other hand, his disguise does seem to anticipate their eventual encounter. It may serve as a way for Loaysa to distance himself completely from sexuality, neutralizing the erotic threat he might otherwise pose. By dressing this way, Loaysa presents himself as the opposite of what he

latch, the characters' musicking fills the vestibule with song. The airtight acoustics of its interior transfigure the hayloft into a kind of pulmonary space that, like the chest cavity of a singer, reverberates with melodic vibrations perceptible to those outside its walls" ("Cervantes's Black Castrato" 5). In a similar vein, Avilés proposes that the space occupied by Luis and the *torno* functions like a digestive tract through which music, the performer's voice, and food and wine all pass; a sensory channel leading to the symbolic "poison" that Carrizales himself has manufactured ("*Fortaleza tan guardada"* 83). This digestive metaphor underscores how the house absorbs and filters external stimuli into Carrizales' system of control.

truly is in terms of looks and charm, appearing less dangerous to Luis. Once inside, however, he can discard the disguise and reveal his true self.

The next step in his strategy of conquering the house is the manipulation of Luis' ears. Loaysa approaches the *casapuerta* for the first time,

> Puesto allí Loaysa, sacaba una guitarrilla grasienta y falta de algunas cuerdas, y, como él era algo músico, comenzaba a tañer algunos sones alegres y regocijados, mudando la voz por no ser conocido. Con esto, se daba priesa a cantar romances de moros y moras, a la loquesca, con tanta gracia, que cuantos pasaban por la calle se ponían a escucharle; y siempre, en tanto que cantaba, estaba rodeado de muchachos; y Luis, el negro, poniendo los oídos por entre las puertas, estaba colgado de la música del virote, y diera un brazo por poder abrir la puerta y escucharle más a su placer: tal es la inclinación que los negros tienen a ser músicos (107-108).

This passage offers a great deal to comment on, but I would like to start with a discussion of Loaysa's choice of instrument, "una guitarrilla grasienta y falta de algunas cuerdas". While seemingly degraded, it is dangerously potent, acting as a primary tool for entry into the house. From Chapter 1, we recall John Neubauer's discussion of the Platonic philosophy of music as, "not intrinsically harmonious but a corruptible social instrument" (24), especially instrumental music because it bypasses rational discourse provided by words, appealing instead to feeling and passion. Ted Gioia summarizes this in the context of subversive music:

> In Plato, we repeatedly encounter these two different kinds of music. One type is essential to a well-ordered society; the other is risky and must be dealt with cautiously, or perhaps even prohibited. Plato would have understood quite well the concept of subversive music—he constantly warns against it. 'Beware of changing to a new form of music, since it threatens the whole system' (103).

While it is clear that Loaysa accompanies his guitar with singing in his performance, this seems to resonate here. The danger, risk, or even an inherent sense of violence of music can be traced back to prehistoric origins, particularly illustrated in the use of the term "instrument". Gioia highlights the historical link between musical instruments and weapons, discussing how early instruments like the harp may have evolved from the bow. This is reinforced by references to Apollo, who is depicted with both a bow and a lyre, suggesting a symbolic interchangeability between weapon and instrument (see Figure 11). This underscores how, in ancient thought, the acts of making music and committing violence were intimately linked (Gioia 21–22). Gioia recounts the discovery of a flute constructed from a bear femur, dating back 43,000–82,000 years ago. He writes that Neanderthals, likely without an articulate language system, "may have soothed the anxieties and celebrated the modest successes of the arduous lives with the dulcet tones of a flute. But how fitting… that the creator of the oldest surviving musical instrument had to kill a bear first before relaxing with a song" (19).

Figure 11. Charles Meynier (artist), *Apollo, God of Light, Eloquence, Poetry, and the Fine Arts with Urania, Muse of Astronomy* (France, 1798). Oil on canvas. Cleveland Museum of Art.

Gioia's suggestion that music and violence share a common source aligns with the use of music in *El celoso extremeño*. Loaysa's use of music is equally primal; his guitar is both a sound-making device and tool for attack. His guitar-playing dissolves boundaries between inside and out, becoming a weapon in its own right. The *guitarilla* is presented as a paradoxical object—degraded and divine—that in Loaysa's hands, becomes a means of orchestrating the unraveling of Carrizales's carefully constructed "sosiego".[105] We return

[105] Of course, Loaysa must use other "instruments" to achieve his conquest, such as the door-opening tools that he passes through a hole in the wall to Luis. He discusses with his friends, as the narrator describes,

to the scene at hand, in which Loaysa, "algo músico", stationed outside, playing Moorish tunes "a la loquesca, con tanta gracia". The meaning of "a la loquesca" is intriguing, particularly when juxtaposed with the praise of his performance as "con tanta gracia." *Autoridades* defines "loquesca" as "Modo de locos. Es voz inventada" (II, 432). In the definition of the term, the dictionary uses precisely this scene from *El celoso* in its definition of it, "se daba priesa a cantar romances de Moros y Moras, a la loquesca". This apparent contradiction suggests that Loaysa must play and sing fairly well, given that he attracts the attention of passersby; yet he simultaneously plays "like a madman," perhaps "a lo que salga," improvised and erratic. Nevertheless, the narrator notes that those passing on the street stop and crowd around him to listen, evoking a scene reminiscent of "Orpheus and The Animals" (see Figure 12).

Figure 12. Snyders, Frans, and Theodoor van Thulden. "*Orpheus and the Animals*." 1636–1638, Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid. https://www.museodelprado.es/en/the-collection/art-work/orpheus-and-the-animals/e51f3582-810e-43e8-8612-bfab4f66692e.

"Hallólos y contó lo que con el negro dejaba concertado, y otro día hallaron los instrumentos, tales que rompían cualquier clavo como si fuera de palo" (112). He also uses wine and food, which I discuss later.

At the same time, this is not only a mythological reference but also a common urban scene in early modern Spain. Street performers, theater troupes, and singers of romances—especially the popular *romances moriscos*—frequently gathered crowds in towns and cities, earning money if their performance merited it. That Loaysa is able to stop pedestrians and hold their attention signals that he had genuine ability to attract and enchant a public audience. Just as Orpheus's music compels both beasts and humans, Loaysa's playing exerts a similar power of fascination and disruption in the streets of Seville.

Christopher Partridge explores the Orphic dimension of music in *The Lyre of Orpheus: Popular Music, the Sacred, and the Profane*, opening with E.T.A. Hoffmann's observation that music "reveals to man an unknown realm… in which he leaves behind all precise feelings in order to embrace an inexpressible longing" (qtd. in Partridge 1). Drawing on the classical myth of Orpheus, Partridge describes music as a liminal, transgressive force operating at the boundaries of society, capable of emotional seduction and transformation (1–3). As noted in Chapter 1, music's "universal ability to reach into the soul" is rooted in its affective power, which for Partridge gives rise to "communitas" and the creation of new meaning (3). Music becomes a vehicle for forging relationships with those "beyond the bounds of human society" (2), a theme central to *El celoso extremeño*. Partridge argues that music's fundamental connection to human emotionality is what enables meaning-making (38)— a dynamic exemplified by Loaysa's seduction of Luis, who is emotionally and bodily overtaken so that he was "colgado de la música, y diera un brazo

por poder abrir la puerta" (107–08).[106] This moment of ecstatic listening echoes Orpheus's mythical power to charm.

This Orphic capacity to reach the Other resonates in Loaysa's audience: a Black castrato isolated in a hayloft. Loasya's performance likely combined improvisation *"a lo loco"* with enough harmony and recognizable content to remain appealing to passersby. On the street, his music would have sounded familiar and compelling to those who stopped to listen. For Luis, however, the attraction arises from another register. Loaysa's playing may be best understood not as entirely chaotic, but as a carefully balanced blend of the unexpected and the patterned; destabilizing in form, yet deeply alluring. The racialized portrayal of Luis in this passage—"tal es la inclinación que los negros tienen a ser músicos" (108)—invokes a trope in which Blackness is linked to innate musicality. Both Johnson in his article "Cervantes's Black Castrato" and Juan José Pastor Comín, in his book *Loco, trovador y cortesano: bases materiales de la expresión musical en Cervante*s discuss that the stereotype of the Black person with a natural gift for music recurs in both literature and in musical history.

Johnson expands this reading by situating Cervantes's *novela* in the historical context of castrati and enslaved Black musicians in early modern Europe and the Americas. Archival records reveal a sustained presence of Black male sopranos who were prized for their vocal skills and commodified as performers (11). In conclusion, Johnson contends that

[106] Elena Carrera argues, in her article, "Embodied Cognition and Empathy in Miguel de Cervantes's *El Celoso Extremeño*" that Luis represents a stark contrast to Carrizales: his eagerness to listen and his susceptibility to auditory deception contrast sharply with Carrizales's defining inability to hear or listen. While Luis is overcome by what he hears (music, promises), Carrizales's errors stem from what he *sees* and his anxious imagination (118).

"listening to Luis as a castrato allows us to hear the violence of castration, enslavement, and musical labor together, and to grapple with a convergence of racially marked and historically marginalized others" (21). Rather than limiting our reading of Luis to a racial or symbolic type—como es su inclinación—instead, he may be seen as a "liminal yet eminently intersectional figure" who embodies the convergence of musicality, Blackness, and subjugation (21). Ultimately, Johnson challenges readers to reconsider both Cervantes's representational strategies and the broader assumptions embedded in classical music history. He writes, "Cervantes's novella reminds us that sound and voice are contingent upon the positionality of the vocalizer as well as that of the listener," a reminder that sonic identity is never fixed, but always relational and ideologically mediated.[107]

Luis, the personification of the weak link in Carrizales's fortress, is marked by vulnerability. This vulnerability emerges most clearly in the passage where he is described as "colgado de la música del virote," evoking an image of surrender, like a moth irresistibly drawn to a flame, immobilized by the desire to hear the mysterious music. Gioia notes that there is perhaps a biological reason for this trust: when we listen to music, our bodies release oxytocin, the hormone associated with trust: "this change in our body chemistry makes us more trusting of those around us, more willing to cooperate with them in pairs or teams" (17).[108] This statement comes in the middle of Gioia's discussion about music, sex,

[107] Building on this, we might also consider a cultural component to Luis's fascination with Loaysa's performance. The *romances moriscos*, popular in early modern Spain, would likely have carried particular resonance for someone portrayed as Black and possibly of Arabic descent. Cervantes may be intensifying the effect of Loaysa's music by situating Luis's response within this layered cultural and historical background.

[108] Yet, Gioia argues that the power of music cannot be fully explained by science, "Even the most complete mapping of brain functions or body chemistry, with every neuron and synapse found and tracked, will never fully encompass the Jupiter Symphony, a Bach fugue, or the call-and-response antiphony of a work song… biology deals the cards, but social conditions dictate how the game is played" (19).

and violence; he writes that the release of the hormone, “obviously explains why songs can lead to both sexual unions and the formation of military units. They are flip sides of the sane coin. Music creates group cohesion for both creative and destructive purposes” (17). Thus, just as previously seen in the figure of Apollo: music is both soothing and subversive. Loaysa’s music, captivating Luis, is a simultaneous force of control and rebellion.[109]

Ted Gioia's broader thesis emphasizes that musical innovations consistently emerge from the margins of society, with "slaves, bohemians, rebels, and others excluded from positions of power" serving as "catalysts" who introduce "new genes in the musical DNA" (148). This dynamic is evident in Loaysa's performance of "romances de moros y moras drawing on traditions associated with enslaved singers such as the *qiyan* of the Arab world: performers whom Gioia identifies as “the least well-known innovators” but who “anticipated the later shifts in musical culture with greater prescience” (147).[110] The

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[109] Gioia underscores the ancient association between music and healing, drawing attention to Apollo’s dual identity as both healer and musician. According to Gioia, music has physiological and psychological effects; he cites a modern study reporting that participants in a drum circle exhibited elevated T-cell counts and improved immune function after just one hour of music-making, suggesting that music can tangibly alter body chemistry (33). Attali, in a similar vein, discusses the historical tradition of music as healing, “mythology endowed musicians with super-natural and civilizing powers. Orpheus domesticated animals and transplanted trees; Amphion attracted fish; Arion built the walls of Thebes. The medicinal powers of music made musicians into therapists: Pythagoras and Empedocles cured the possessed, and Ismenias cured sciatica. David cured Saul's madness by playing the harp” (12-13).

[110] One of Gioia’s central arguments of his book is that the troubadour tradition, widely credited with inventing Western secular music and the love song, did not originate from European nobility, but rather from the sensual and subversive songs of enslaved women from the Arab world, known as *qiyan* (147). Gioia states that the popular narrative attributing this invention to nobles like William IX is misleading, as female slave singers had already provided this musical example hundreds of years before him (147). These *qiyan* were significant cultural innovators, whose erotic and emotionally expressive performances served as a model for what would later be called "courtly love" (156). Their marginalized status as outsiders gave them a unique artistic license to explore forbidden feelings and create songs with "freshness and audacity" (149). This style, originating in the Arab world, spread through North Africa and into Europe via the Iberian Peninsula following the Muslim conquest (153). Gioia contends that the ethos of "servitude" found in *qiyan* songs, where images of "bondage and servitude" were common in romantic lyrics, only makes sense when considering that their originators were enslaved people, with figures like Caliph Harun al-Rashid embodying this "bondage" to favored slave women centuries before the troubadours (154).

narrator's description of these Moorish romances as "a la loquesca" highlights their disruptive quality. Johnson further emphasizes this point, noting that Afro-descendant musicians, especially those who performed *villancicos*, were "consistently derided as unskilled, strident, and cacophonous" (13-14), cast as sonic threats to cultural harmony. Thus, Loaysa's music— Moorish and "noisy"—embodies both Attali's disruptive noise and Gioia's theory of subversive innovation, showing how musical expression from the periphery is often suppressed precisely because of its power to unsettle dominant norms. [111]

After singing 4 or 5 nights in a row to Luis, Loaysa senses a figurative structural weakness— "pareciéndole que, por donde se había de comenzar a desmoronar aquel edificio" (108)—signaling to him that it might be time to move to the next phase of his plan. He approaches the *casapuerta* and, after asking Luis for some water so he can continue singing, tells Luis that he has heard of his good singing ability, "y a lo que siento y puedo juzgar por el órgano de la voz, que es atiplada, debéis de cantar muy bien" (109). Luis replies that he does not sing "badly", but he only knows three tunes: *La estrella de Venus, Por un verde prado,* and a few verses from a romance of Abenamar. To that Loaysa responds: "*Todas esas son aire*… para las que yo os podría ensenar, porque sé todas las del moro Abindarráez, con las de su dama Jarifa, y todas las que se cantan de la historia del

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[111] Loaysa's description of Luis's voice as *atiplada* is not only a marker of pitch but a culturally loaded term. As Johnson notes, this is the earliest recorded usage of *atiplada* in Spanish, a word related to *tiple*, which was often used in choral contexts to refer to male sopranos, including castrati. Johnson argues, "Castrati, in sum, were such active fixtures of performance and the public imaginary during Cervantes's lifetime that it is almost inconceivable that he would not have been aware of them" (12-13). In his article, he highlights recent scholarship indicating that enslaved Black vocalists—particularly Black male sopranos—were much more prevalent in early modern society than previously recognized (19). We also recall that Loaysa modifies his voice in this scene to avoid being recognized, "mudando la voz por no ser conocido". This adds another element to his performance, for he may be changing his pitch as well.

gran sofí Tomunibeyo, con las de la zarabanda a lo divino…" (109, my emphasis). The term *aire* draws attention here, as previously discussed in Chapter 1. Loaysa's tone suggests its pejorative meaning: "Frivolidad, futilidad o poca importancia de algo" (I, 143). That is, the songs Luis knows are not music according to Loaysa, but mere air: ephemeral sound that lacks some sort of substance. From this perspective, *aire* becomes a synonym for noise: ineffectual, and empty. As explored in Chapter 1, Fray Luis de León draws a poetic distinction between *viento* and *aire*, where *viento* represents disorder and distraction, while *aire*, becomes a medium of transcendence when governed by divine music. In *El celoso extremeño*, however, aire regains its association with meaninglessness; Loaysa treats Luis's songs as insubstantial, amounting to noise.

More concretely in the context of subversive music, Loaysa's characterization of certain songs as mere "aire" introduces a hierarchical distinction between popular music and the potentially "trivial" tunes known to Luis. Loaysa offers a catalog of exoticized musical references and highlights the "zarabanda a lo divino" claiming that they are so potent that "hacen pasmar a los mismos portugueses". [112] To this, Luis responds with an added sonic element, a sigh: "A esto suspiró el negro y dijo: ¿Qué aprovecha todo eso, si no sé cómo meteros en casa?" (109). Loaysa responds that there is an answer for everything, if Luis is able to get his hands on the master key,

> y así podré entrar dentro de noche y enseñaros mejor que al Preste Juan de las Indias, porque veo ser gran lástima que se pierda una tal voz como la vuestra,

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[112] Here, we see a hint towards the ecstatic power of music, which I discuss in a later section. Pasmar is defined as "Ocasionar, o causar suspensión o pérdida de los sentídos, y del movimiento de los espiritus" or "Vale tambien quedar suspenso, admirado o enagenado de alguna cosa notable" (II, 144)

> faltándole el arrimo de la guitarra; que quiero que sepáis, hermano Luis, que la mejor voz del mundo pierde de sus quilates cuando no se acompaña con el instrumento, ora sea de guitarra o clavicímbano, de órganos o de arpa; pero el que más a vuestra voz le conviene es el instrumento de la guitarra, por ser el más mañero y menos costoso de los instrumentos (110).[113]

We should note, in the course of this seduction, it is not just Loaysa's music that is so captivating, but rather—and perhaps even more importantly— the promise of receiving lessons from him. Loaysa plays on his ego, as previously seen in the quote, "que he oído decir que vos tenéis muy buena habilidad…." (109). Elena Carrera touches on this in her article, "Embodied Cognition and Empathy in Miguel de Cervantes's *El celoso extremeño*" writing, "Through the door, Luis hears Loaysa's deceitful words, the flattering lies, and the false pretense that Loaysa will teach him to play the guitar in less than a fortnight. Through the sense of hearing (the sense Aristotle had associated with teaching and learning), he becomes so affectively connected to Loaysa that he abandons his role as the house's guard to help him break in" (118). It is the promise of music, along with the actual music being played, that sells Luis on this plan.

[113] Drawing on the ancient symbolic divide between lyre and flute, Gioia discusses Aristotle and Nietzsche's view of the flute and guitar. They both identify the flute as the emblem of Dionysian excess: breath-driven, ecstatic, and resistant to rational control. In contrast, the lyre symbolizes Apollonian order, restraint, and harmony. But this symbolic dynamic has inverted over time, as Gioia writes, "The guitar, a kind of modern lyre, is now the dangerous source of disorder, while the flute is seen as a prim, subdued instrument evoking respectability and orderliness. This is one of the most striking examples of the dialectic at play in music history in which things turn into their opposites" (106).

They land on a plan of execution, and before Loaysa departs for the night, he leaves his new pupil with one last recommendation, which results in an interesting exchange between the two characters:

> —Pues, a la mano de Dios—dijo Loaysa… advertid en no comer cosas flemosas, porque no hacen ningún provecho, sino mucho daño a la voz.
>
> —Ninguna cosa me enronquece tanto—respondió el negro—como el vino, pero no me lo quitaré yo por todas cuantas voces tiene el suelo.
>
> —No digo tal—dijo Loaysa, —ni Dios tal permita. Bebed, hijo Luis, bebed, y buen provecho os haga, que el vino que se bebe con medida jamás fue causa de daño alguno…
>
> —Digo—dijo Loaysa—que tal sea mi vida como eso me parece, porque la seca garganta ni gruñe ni canta[114] (111).

Loaysa's comment, "la seca garganta ni gruñe ni canta," reveals a distinction between sound as animal noise and sound as cultivated musical expression. The verb *gruñir* (to grunt or growl), associated with the guttural vocalization of pigs—"formar el puerco el sonido propio de su voz," as Covarrubias defines it—suggests incoherence, a sound without melody or intention. In contrast, *cantar* signals ordered and controlled expression. Covarrubias also notes that *gruñir* in humans refers to confused muttering. Thus, by

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[114] Johnson discusses this line in the context of what he calls "a vocal therapeutics", citing Pietro Cerone's *El melopeo y maestro* (1613), which was published the same year as *El celoso extremeño*. The text advises male sopranists to drink diluted wine, since "pure wine enfeebles the voice, and takes away the subtle and penetrating sharpness that it has" (qtd. in Johnson 9). This highlights how food, drink, and humoral influences shape vocal expression and undermine the idea of a stable, unchanging voice. More generally, Johnson writes, "these depictions reveal a general fondness in "El celoso extremeño" for accentuating the embodied aspects of the voice" (9).

juxtaposing *gruñir* and *cantar*, Loaysa underscores the transformative power of voice: the throat must be moistened not merely to make sound, but to elevate it from noise to music; from grunt to song. This same distinction appears in *El coloquio de los perros*, when Berganza describes the gypsy women singing at the wedding feast of Cañizares's daughter "y no con voces delicadas, sonoras y admirables, sino con voces roncas, que, solas o juntas, parecía, no que cantaban, sino que gritaban o gruñían" (311).[115]

More broadly, Covarrubias's definition—"Decimos del hombre gruñir, cuando muestra algún descontento con palabras confusas dichas entre dientes" (452)—leads us to a larger issue in the text: racialized speech, or "habla de negros", as examined by Nicholas R. Jones in *Staging Habla de Negros*. Jones analyzes the portrayal of Black characters in early modern Spanish literature through a racial and ethnic lens, an approach especially relevant to *El celoso extremeño*. He argues that *habla de negros* speech forms "hyperembody the bozal imaginary alongside the maxillofacial economy the term purports in the racial imagining of how illiterate black slaves might enunciate, pronounce, and speak Castilian incorrectly" (80). Both Johnson and, to a lesser extent, Pastor Comín discuss how Black characters were frequently depicted speaking in altered, accented, or otherwise "incorrect" Spanish, a representational strategy that underscored their cultural otherness and colonial subjugation. This dynamic surfaces in the *novela*, for example, in the narrator's description of Guiomar as "no muy ladina" (123), marking her speech as insufficiently Castilian and linguistically inferior. I discuss her urgent, broken delivery of the warning that Carrizales has awoken—"¡Despierto señor, señora!"— near the end of this chapter.

[115] This text also reads, "la vieja gruñía, yo apretaba los dientes, crecía la confusión, y mi amo, que ya había llegado al ruido, se desesperaba oyendo decir que yo era demonio" (311)

After more proposals from Loaysa—and a little wine, also an integral part of his seduction scheme—Luis finds the plan convincing, "abrió la puerta y recogió dentro a su Orfeo[116] y maestro" (112). Soon after,

> sacó su guitarra Loaysa; y, tocándola baja y suavemente, *suspendió al pobre negro de manera que estaba fuera de sí escuchándole*. Habiendo tocado un poco, sacó de nuevo colación y diola a su discípulo; y, aunque con dulce, bebió con tan buen talante de la bota, que le dejó más fuera de sentido que la música. Pasado esto, ordenó que luego tomase lición Luis, y, como el pobre negro tenía cuatro dedos de vino sobre los sesos, no acertaba traste; y, con todo eso, le hizo creer Loaysa que ya sabía por lo menos dos tonadas; y era lo bueno que el negro se lo creía, y *en toda la noche no hizo otra cosa que tañer con la guitarra destemplada y sin las cuerdas necesarias* (113, my emphasis).

Here we see a clear example of the seductive power of music, and, even more, one that makes it a kind of transcendence for its audience. Luis, infatuated and suspended by soft music, has an out-of-body experience. In contrast to the Neoplatonic journey of sacred music that we see in Fray Luis' "Oda a Salinas", this is not a religious experience, but rather the result of a manipulative plan. Immediately after, Loaysa passes the guitar to Luis, who, under the influence of alcohol, verifies a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy—convinced that he has learned to play—while in reality producing only dissonance. What he plays is not

[116] Laura Gomez Iñiguez, among others, has noted the mythical aspects of the novel in her article. In her publication entitled "Humor Cervantino: *El Celoso Extremeño*", she makes a brief connection between the house of Carrizales and a descent into hell.

refined music but discordant noise: the guitar is out of tune and even missing strings. This poorly played music gives us the impression of a noisy scene, even if its producer remains unaware. It is a flawed music lesson, with Luis becoming an unwitting agent of chaos.

From Sensory Starvation to Ecstatic Experience

The next morning, after Carrizales had left the house, Luis picks up the guitar and starts playing it again. The maids react with immediate curiosity, "—¿Qué es esto, Luis? ¿De cuándo acá tienes tú guitarra, o quién te la ha dado? —¿Quién me la ha dado? —respondió Luis—El mejor músico que hay en el mundo, y el que me ha de enseñar en menos de seis días más de seis mil sones" (113-114). Though skeptical, the women are immediately intrigued and ask when they too will hear the mysterious musician perform. A maiden responds that it is impossible for them to see or hear Loaysa, since the house has been deliberately designed to sever all contact with the outside world: "no tenemos ventanas a la calle para poder ver ni oír a nadie" (114). The power of Carrizales thus manifests in the total restriction of perception, in the view of the women. Yet, they are far from complacent. When Luis mimics Loaysa's optimism that "para todo hay remedio si no es para escusar la muerte, y más si vosotras sabéis o queréis callar" (114), one of the slaves replies, "¡Y cómo que callaremos, hermano Luis!... Callaremos más que si fuésemos mudas; porque te prometo, amigo, que me muero por oír una buena voz, que después que aquí nos emparedaron, ni aun el canto de los pájaros habemos oído" (114). The reference to birdsong reminds us of the sonic motifs of a locus amoenus explored in Chapter 1. There, I considered the role of bird song in Fray Luis de León's "Vida retirada," where pastoral soundscapes—gliding waters, rustling leaves, and singing birds—signal spiritual peace and contemplative retreat. In *El celoso extremeño*, however, the absence of even this most

natural and gentle of sounds, “ni aun…”, is presented here as the most basic aural necessity that the women have been deprived of. Where Fray Luis celebrates birdsong as a sound of release, the maids in Carrizales’s house invoke it as a lost auditory necessity. In one case, sound enables repose; in the other, its absence signals repression.

Loaysa finally is one step closer to his desired audience: all of the women of the house have gathered for his performance, except Leonora:

> Pues, ¿qué diré de lo que ellas sintieron cuando le oyeron tocar el *Pésame dello* y acabar con el endemoniado son de la zarabanda, nuevo entonces en España? No quedó vieja por bailar, ni moza que no se hiciese pedazos, todo a la sorda y con silencio estraño, poniendo centinelas y espías que avisasen si el viejo despertaba (115).

First, we should note the mention of the zarabanda, which was, as Cervantes himself writes, “new” in Spain at the time. A dance with African and Afro-American origins, it was widely associated with enslaved Black communities and provoked moral outrage for its sensuality and perceived indecency. The narrator’s description of it as “endemoniado” highlights just this, starkly contrasted with Loaysa’s previous reference to it as “zarabanda a lo divino.”[117] Pastor Comín writes on the zarabanda, “Su influencia en la población general fue enorme, como lo demuestran protestas de moralistas y escritos costumbristas: la zarabanda fue un

[117] Pastor Comín writes in a note in his book, “Cervantes conoce muy bien las formas y cadencias musicales … La existencia habitual del esclavo negro, músico y cantor, cuya trascendencia no había sido lo suficientemente desvelada por la crítica cervantina es un magnífico ejemplo de lo expuesto y su presencia justifica la danza de la zarabanda, cuya estructura musical, según vimos, no deja de entrar en relación con la novela en la que se integra. La profusión, en consecuencia, de personajes vinculados al mundo musical justifica la revisión de sus contextos sociales para demostrar su relevancia en la generación de sentido dentro de la obra cervantina” (273).

baile que contó con las simpatías del público, a pesar de las prohibiciones y condenas de los moralistas al uso" (150). The dance's sensuality was so infamous that Pastor Comín writes that Juan Mariana, for example, wholeheartedly denounced its performance, comparing it to brothel scenes acted out in public: "con extrema deshonestidad.... con boca, brazos, lomos y con todo el cuerpo" (qtd. in Pastor Comín 150).[118] Despite moralist opposition, the dance's popularity endured. In contrast to frivolous "aire", the *zarabanda a lo divino* exemplifies what Pastor Comín calls a fusion of sacred and profane elements, cloaked in religious language. It is *divino, sagrado* in Loaysa's eyes because it becomes the medium that reshapes the auditory space of Carrizales's fortress.[119]

The carefully calibrated quiet maintained to avoid waking Carrizales recalls the phrasing from Chapter XX of *Don Quijote*, "su estraño silencio, el sordo y confuso estruendo destos árboles." Yet while both passages invoke auditory paradox, they describe two different experiences. In *Don Quijote*, "sordo" and "extrano" describe a disorienting nocturnal soundscape that evokes the Gothic: an uncanny silence not marked by absence of sound but rather a spectral presence. In *El celoso extremeño*, a scene of tension and

[118] Mariana's full quote reads, "¿Qué dirán cuando sepan como van cundiendo los males y creciendo la fama, que en España, donde está el imperio, el albergo de la religión y de la justicia, se representan no sólo en secreto, sino en público, con extrema deshonestidad, con meneos y palabras a propósito, los actos más torpes y sucios que pasan y hacen en los burdeles, representando abrazos y besos y todo lo demás, con boca, brazos, lomos y con todo el cuerpo, que sólo el referirlo causa vergüenza?" (qtd. in Pastor Comín 150). We again see fame playing a role, as Mariana worries about what might be said about the dance to tarnish Spain's reputation.

[119] Pastor Comín outlines a triangle of power: Loaysa as manipulator; Luis as instrument; Leonora as sacred goal, while also noting how racialized and gendered figures (like the Black maids) contribute to the structure of the story (150). Indeed, as this scholar notes, if Carrizales's home is read symbolically as a "Templo," then none of its figures—neither Luis (representing the ignorant lower clergy), nor the female figures (the dueña and maids), nor Carrizales himself—prove worthy guardians of the "Truth," embodied by Leonora. They are confronted by Loaysa, a "heretic", a "Luther", who "hace de la música popular (el coral) un instrumento para el acceso a Dios… para gozar de la unión divina" (154), a reference to the debate of whether or not adultery is actually committed at the end of the story.

suspense is also described, but the "silencio estraño" that accompanies the women's dancing is a carefully constructed and performative quiet. It is not a suggestion of otherworldliness, but rather a tense suppression of joyful noise, necessary to maintain the deception of Carrizales. Yet, both texts share a preoccupation with the tension between silence and sound to heighten emotional intensity: in *Don Quijote*, this intensifies dread and uncertainty; in *El celoso*, it amplifies the thrill of wrongdoing.

Loaysa also performs a few *coplillas de la seguida*, which "acabó de echar el sello al gusto de las escuchantes," sealing the women's delight and prompting them to ask eagerly who the musician is. Luis proudly declares that he is "el más galán y gentil hombre que había en toda la pobrería de Sevilla" (115). Their curiosity only grows, and they press Luis for details on how he plans to bring this mysterious figure into the house. Luis responds with silence, "A esto no les respondió palabra," but suggests that if they make a small hole in the wall, they'd be able to catch a glimpse of him when he arrived.

After several nights of this extremely visually- limited contact, Loaysa offers a bolder proposal: to slip a sleeping powder into Carrizales's wine—"que le harían dormir con pesado sueño más tiempo del ordinario" (116)—allowing the women to engage with him "sin sobresalto del viejo." The women respond with enthusiasm: "No serían ellos polvos de sueño para él, sino polvos de vida para todas nosotras y para la pobre de mi señora Leonora, su mujer, que no la deja a sol ni a sombra, ni la pierde de vista un solo momento" (116). Once Loaysa acquires the powder, the stage is set: "Vino la noche, y la banda de las palomas acudió al reclamo de la guitarra" (117).

It is significant that Leonora—the principal target of the seduction—initially refuses to see the musician. However, after hearing of his growing reputation in the house, "tantas cosas le dijeron sus criadas… de la suavidad de la música y de la gallarda disposición del músico pobre (que, sin haberle visto, le alababa y le subía sobre Absalón y sobre Orfeo), que la pobre señora, convencida y persuadida dellas, hubo de hacer lo que no tenía ni tuviera jamás en voluntad" (117). This passage offers an interesting example of music's seductive force—not through direct sound, but through reputation and rumor. It is not the music itself, but the chorus of praise, that stirs something in Leonora. Although it is ultimately the promise of music that compels her, it is the "noise" Loaysa has generated that prompts her to go along with the plan.[120]

What follows is Loaysa's vocal performance: not as a musician, but as a speaker. When questioned by Leonora about his intentions and honor, he responds:

> Yo, señoras mías… no vine aquí sino con intención de servir a todas vuesas mercedes con el alma y con la vida, condolido de su no vista clausura y de los ratos que en este estrecho género de vida se pierden. Hombre soy yo, por vida de mi padre, tan sencillo, tan manso y de tan buena condición, y tan obediente, que no haré más de aquello que se me mandare… (118).

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[120] We see a similar example at the end of the novel when la dueña approaches Leonora, "con una larga y tan concertada arenga, que pareció que de muchos días la tenía estudiada. Encareciόle su gentileza, su valor, su donaire y sus muchas gracias. Pintóle de cuánto más gusto le serían los abrazos del amante mozo que los del marido viejo, asegurándole el secreto y la duración del deleite, con otras cosas semejantes a éstas, que el demonio le puso en la lengua, llenas de colores retóricos, tan demonstrativos y eficaces, que movieran no sólo el corazón tierno y poco advertido de la simple e incauta Leonora, sino el de un endurecido mármol…. En fin, tanto dijo la dueña, tanto persuadió la dueña, que Leonora se rindió, Leonora se engañó y Leonora se perdió… " (128-129). Here, its it not the tone of her voice that is so persuasive, as seen in *El casamiento engañoso*—"No era hermosa en estremo, pero éralo de suerte que podía enamorar comunicada, porque tenía un tono de habla tan suave que se entraba por los oídos en el alma" (284)—but rather the semantics of what she says. The persuasive power here is not acoustic, but linguistic.

Here, Loaysa crafts a carefully modulated persona, deploying a different kind of seductive language: one of submission and softness. The use of the term *manso* here is quite different than what we have seen in previous chapters. It is not a *manso ruïdo* that inspires Fray Luis to renounce the material, nor a *"temeroso y manso ruido"* that causes horror for Don Quijote and Sancho. Instead, *manso* is used in a calculated performance of passivity, in a portrayal of self as an obedient servant, a gentle presence who will do nothing but what he is told.[121] Though not describing a noise itself, *manso* here informs Loaysa's performance as one of self-regulation. He presents himself as a source of controlled, non-threatening sound, a contrast to the disruptive noise that has thus far defined his presence.

The women, persuaded by this performance, agree to give him a wax impression of the master key. But, before entering the house, Leonora asks Loaysa to make a promise: "no ha de hacer otra cosa cuando esté acá dentro sino cantar y tañer cuando se lo mandaren, y que ha de estar encerrado y quedito donde le pusiéremos" (119). This marks one of the first explicit signs of concern about noise as the conspirators set their plan into motion. Everyone involved operates under a common constraint that Carrizales must remain unaware, which adds an important undercurrent of fear and suspense to the tale. Thus, sound becomes a carefully managed tool: there is both a desire to unleash the sound of music and celebration, but also a constant fear that too much noise will betray them. The

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[121] Covarrubias defines manso in the following way, "Se dice lo que es aplicable, y sin violencia, como correr el agua o el río manso. De los animales, se llaman mansos aquellos que se dejan tratar y palpar con la mano, la cual incluso amansa a la bestia cerril, trayendole la mano por el rostro, el cuello y el lomo… Se dice manso a mano cuando un animal viene a comer de la mano del pastor" (537). This performative tameness recalls Lope de Vega's *Sonetos del manso perdido*, where the *manso*, an animal once cared for and fed by the poet's hand, is lured away. As Maurice Molho argues in "Teoría de mansos: un triple soneto de Lope de Vega", the sonnets stage the drama of erotic loss through the allegory of a domesticated animal who, once tenderly bound to the speaker, strays into the hands of a rival. Loaysa's "manso y de tan buena condición" echoes this, framing submission as seductive strategy.

key is in the intensity. As discussed in the context of acousmatic sound in Chapter 2, we once again see an interplay of wonder and terror in the face of the auditory, as the inhabitants are both captivated by the musician and terrified of the same music waking Carrizales. Alan Bloom captures this sentiment, “Music is the medium of the human soul in its most ecstatic condition of wonder and terror” (qtd. in Gioia, 108).

On the other hand, silence from Carrizales’ part becomes suspect, for only the continuous sound of snoring confirms that the deception remains undetected. When Carrizales is given the sleeping salve, “Poco espacio tardó el alopiado ungüento en dar manifiestas señales de su virtud, porque luego comenzó a dar el viejo tan grandes ronquidos, que se pudieran oír en la calle: *música, a los oídos de su esposa, más acordada que la del maeso de su negro*” (121, my emphasis). This quote, of course, highlights the subjective and interchangeable perspective of noise and music, while also prompting the reader to question how the snores might be heard on the street, if the fortress was indeed so soundproof. A few pages later, the narrator states that he “ronca como un animal” (124). The snoring functions as a kind of sonic shield—a “music” that reassures the women he is unconscious. In contrast, the lack of noise works in a similar manner. After la dueña checks on Carrizales to confirm that he is still asleep, the others follow her lead: “volvieron a ver si era verdad que su amo había despertado; y, viendo que todo estaba sepultado en silencio, llegaron a la sala donde habían dejado a su señora… y, preguntándole por el músico y por la dueña, les dijo dónde estaban, y todas, con el mismo silencio que habían traído, se llegaron a escuchar por entre las puertas lo que entrambos trataban” (127–128). Here, silence functions not as absence, but as reassurance: a sign that all is still proceeding according to

plan. Leonora, gaining confidence, soon declares—“con voz no tan baja como la primera”—that her husband sleeps like a dead man, giving the green light for the “concierto” to begin.

Leaving Guiomar to monitor Carrizales in case he awakens, the rest sit with the musician in the middle, taking a candle to admire him, “¡Ay, qué copete que tiene tan lindo y tan rizado! ¡Ay, qué blancura de dientes!... ¡Ay, qué ojos tan grandes y tan rasgados! Ésta alababa la boca, aquélla los pies, y todas juntas hicieron dél *una menuda anotomía y pepitoria*. Solo Leonora callaba...” (125, my emphasis). *Autoridades* includes under "pepitoria": “un conjunto de cosas diversas y sin orden”. Here, it is representative of a noisy scene: a tangle of dissonant, multiple praises of different frequencies that do not enter into harmonious relations with each other. What begins as noisy praise soon shifts into rhythmic performance, as the text explores how music acts not only as a conduit of chaos but as a vehicle of trance and transformation.

Gioia argues that music and ecstatic experience are universally linked: “in every part of the world, at every stage of history (and prehistory), the two come together synergistically, the music heightening the ecstasy, and the ecstasy heightening the music” (31). While there are skeptics that deny that music can trigger trance, empirical evidence increasingly proves otherwise. Andrew Neher’s 1961 study revealed that repetitive rhythms can influence brain activity, a phenomenon known as “auditory driving” (31). Later neuroscience confirmed that the brain tends to entrain, or synchronize its frequency, to external rhythms. Neuroscientists call this phenomenon *entrainment*, or the tendency of brainwaves to match their frequency to the recurring pattern of an external stimulus. Gioia writes, “Put simply, the human organism aligns itself to the rhythms of the world, whether

musical or visual" (32). Terms like *entertained*, *entranced*, or *entrained* capture the mind's rhythmic submission to sound. But the music in the story does more: it leaves the women emboldened, and ultimately liberated from the constraints imposed upon them.

Soon after, *la dueña* asks Loaysa to sing some *copillas*, and "Cumplióle Loaysa su deseo. Levantáronse todas y se comenzaron a hacer pedazos bailando. Sabía la dueña las coplas, y cantólas con más gusto que buena voz; y fueron éstas:

Madre, la mi madre,

guardas me ponéis,

que si yo no me guardo,

no me guardaréis

(125, emphasis in original)

These sung verses mark the peak of women's liberation in the novel. The music—personified by Loaysa and now taken up by the women themselves—has breached the fortress Carrizales so painstakingly built. At this moment, the women are no longer passive listeners but active participants in a sonic rebellion. *La dueña's* voice, though imperfect, contributes to the scene not through its beauty but its affective force. In doing so, her performance fuses sound and resistance, transforming noise into an expression of freedom.[122] The final line of the copla—"que si yo no me guardo, / no me guardaréis"—functions as a chant-like mantra of feminine autonomy that mirrors the entrainment

[122] Francisco Vivar, in his article, "La experiencia trascendental de la música en Cervantes y Kafka" also notes this, "Estos versos sopesados por las mujeres rompen la autoridad del viejo. El rebaño se deshace y las mujeres se sienten libres. Ya son dueñas de su voluntad" (111).

phenomena Gioia describes. The rhythm of the refrain disrupts patriarchal authority by repeating a truth that challenges control.

As Pastor Comín observes, the copla "Madre, la mi madre" not only appears in other works like *La entretenida*, but also circulated widely in both courtly and popular settings, often carrying erotic undertones. He cites a more vulgar version—"que me come el quiquiriquí / —Ráscatele, hija, y calla, / que también me come a mí"—that makes the suggestive implications even more overt. Performed within the setting of a zarabanda, the copla becomes a vehicle for subversion. Pastor Comín argues that Cervantes likely drew on this layered tradition "más por lo que calla y sugiere que por lo que cuenta," allowing subversive meanings to emerge through allusion rather than explicit narration.

One other stanza in the full version of the song underscores this dynamic:

Dicen que está escrito,

y con gran razón,

ser la privación

causa de apetito;

crece en infinito

encerrado amor

(125)

This stanza, too, highlights the tension between confinement and desire. Similarly, this copla may also echo the influence of enslaved women's songs. Ted Gioia notes that troubadour music was not shaped by aristocratic voices but by the songs of enslaved young

women, whose melodies expressed themes of desire, captivity, and resistance (154).[123] In *El celoso extremeño*, the connection between song and servitude is explicit: while it is Loaysa who introduces music into the household, it is the enslaved characters who facilitate its entry and help sustain its presence. The ensuing moment of collective transgression emerges when the women join in singing and dancing alongside him.

Finally, it is interesting to note that the climax of the experience of freedom is performed with a moralistic lyric that communicates the ethical theme of the entire novel. At the moment of almost absolute passion and transgression, the *coplas* reflect on the need for women to, literally, protect themselves from the dangers they are at this moment experiencing. The absence of prior musical experience heightens the women's desire to listen, just as deprivation often intensifies longing in other domains. It is not the meaning of the music that drives the women's liberation, but the act of making music itself. The women don't pay attention to the message of the song because, for them, music is a tool of liberation, not a lesson to be heeded. While the lyrical content may hold little meaning for the female characters in that moment, it invites the reader to reflect on the ethical tensions underlying their apparent freedom.

Conclusion: From Dissonance to Silence

There the tree rises. Oh pure surpassing!
Oh Orpheus sings! Oh great tree of sound!
And all is silent, And from this silence arise
New beginnings, intimations, changings.
- Rainer Maria Rilke, *Sonnets to Orpheus*

[123] See note 110.

When the singing concludes, Guiomar arrives, “toda turbada, hiriendo de pie y de mano como si tuviera alferecía; y, con voz entre ronca y baja, dijo: —¡Despierto señor, señora; y, señora, despierto señor, y levantas y viene!” (126). First, we note the tonality of Guiomar’s voice, “ronca y baja”, creating an auditory image of utmost distress when paired with her drastic physical movements. Her voice functions here as an embodiment of panic: its “ronca” quality suggesting strain or breathlessness, while “baja” adds a layer of secrecy or caution, as if she is wary of raising an alarm too loudly. This auditory cue is deeply contrasted with a much different set of noises in the most chaotic moment of the *novela*,

> Quien ha visto banda de palomas estar comiendo en el campo, sin miedo, lo que ajenas manos sembraron, que al furioso estrépito de disparada escopeta se azora y levanta, y, olvidada del pasto, confusa y atónita, cruza por los aires, tal se imagine que quedó la banda y corro de las bailadoras… cuál por una y cuál por otra parte, se fueron a esconder por los desvanes y rincones de la casa, dejando solo al músico; el cual, dejando la guitarra y el canto, lleno de turbación, no sabía qué hacerse… En fin, todo era confusión, sobresalto y miedo (127)

It is not the tone of Guiomar’s words that transform into noise, but rather her warning call that Carrizales has awoken. Her words effectively transform into noise—equated to a “furioso estrépito de disparada escopeta”— a spark that ignites absolute chaos in the house. A clear auditory contrast is presented in this scene between an image of birds peacefully feeding, “sin miedo” in a field and their subsequent noisy scattering. Also notable is the mention of seeds sown by "ajenas manos"; a reminder of music’s power to create a sense of trust. A scene of pigeons scattering prompts a clear auditory reference to any reader: the rustling of feathers, flurry of coos, and an overwhelming sound of flapping

wings as they take flight. The narrator, in fact, is aware of the universality of this reference, noting, "quién ha visto… tal se imagine… ". This "turbación," is experienced by the entire household, and signifies a powerful overturning of order: Hermetism degenerates into chaos, consonance into dissonance, and what began as a subversive concert descends into a scene of bewilderment and disorder, revealing how even the most meticulously constructed, seemingly soundproof walls can collapse into noise and confusion. Cervantes uses the term "estrépito" here for the first time in the story, perhaps to emphasize the intensity of the sound. We recall its use in Chapter 20 to refer to Sancho's noiseless bodily movements. Here, by contrast, estrépito names the shattering of order: from harmonious performance to the loud, uncontrollable "turbación" that engulfs the house.

As musical and noisy as the story is, it is ultimately silence—in particular, a lack of voice—that prevails at the end. As Johnson notes in his article, the resolution of the novela is marked not by speech but by successive failures to speak. He sketches out three examples of this failure, starting with when Carrizales finds Leonora and Loaysa asleep together, "la voz se le pegó a la garganta" (135). Her parents, upon hearing the news, suffer the same muteness—"[a sus] gargantas… se les atravesó un nudo que no les dejaba hablar palabra" (135). And finally, Leonora herself, despite her innocence, is unable to vocally defend or explain herself. Johnson observes that the narrator even shifts to the first-person voice to marvel at her silence, highlighting its peculiarity given that she had successfully resisted Loaysa's advances. The closing lines confirm this: "Sólo no sé qué fue la causa que Leonora no puso más ahínco en desculparse… *pero la turbación le ató la lengua*, y la priesa que se dio a morir su marido no dio lugar a su disculpa" (135, my emphasis). What began as a seductive crescendo of music and noise ends in collapse that leaves every character

voiceless. This “turbación,” born from the sonic forces that dismantled Carrizales’s fortress, leaves behind not celebration or resolution. What remains instead is Carrizales’ final testament, which determines the fate of all involved. The characters leave the house for the outside world, while Leonora, ironically, enters yet another confined space: a convent. Even the narrator, who reconstructs the story from this testament, is ultimately left with the unexplained silence of Leonora, whose voice remains absent.

In this chapter, I argued that *El celoso extremeño* is not only Cervantes’s most sonically charged *novela ejemplar*, but also a clear example of noise and music as forces of disturbance and disruption. Drawing on the theoretical frameworks of Jacques Attali, Ted Gioia, and Christopher Partridge, I showed how Cervantes constructs a complex soundscape in which music, noise, and even silence serve as agents of seduction, subversion, and collapse. I began by examining Carrizales’s *fortaleza* as visual and auditory control. His obsessive fortification of the house reveals a fantasy of control over the senses, an effort doomed from the start. As Attali argues, every social order contains the roots of its own disorder; here, that disorder enters through the one element Carrizales cannot contain: sound. The enslaved women’s longing for sound reveals not only the limits of Carrizales’s power, but also the vulnerability of the fortress to sonic infiltration. Loaysa’s guitar, voice, and promise of music become weapons of seduction precisely because the senses have been so aggressively censored.

Loaysa’s infiltration into the home is primarily an act of sonic subversion. His guitar is degraded and missing strings, yet it boasts a charming, affective power. Loaysa performs as an Orphic figure, breaking down barriers, entering closed spaces, and conjuring new

social relations through sound. Luis, the gatekeeper of the house, is the first to fall under the spell, seduced by Loaysa's music and promises of musical instruction. The seduction of Luis then spreads to the other characters as a collective. The women, starved by their lack of sensory stimuli, embrace Loaysa's arrival. The scenes of *zarabanda* throughout and the *copla* at the end of the story exemplify a transformation. Through their covert performance, the enslaved women reclaim agency in voice, song, and dance. Drawing on the music history offered by Ted Gioia, I proposed that this copla shows a direct connection to enslaved women's songs. Gioia argues that musical innovation consistently emerges from peripheral spaces, among the enslaved, the outcast, and the rebels. Within this context, the women's participation in the concert is not just transgressive in the moment, but part of a broader tradition of subversive musical practice that disturbs, resists, and ultimately redefines the boundaries of the acceptable.

This moment soon dissolves into *estrépito*: noise, panic, and confusion in the face of Guiomar's whispered warning of Carrizales' awakening. It is noise—no longer orchestrated or concealed—that unravels everything, ultimately resulting in a final, ambiguous silencing of the characters at the end of the story. The "turbación"—shame, fear, or trauma—born from the very sound that once offered release for Leonora, now silences her. In this way, Cervantes sets up a full auditory arc: from suppression, to seduction, to ecstasy, to silence. What makes this story subversive is not simply that noise enters where it should not, but that it reconfigures the articulation of power and control, dissolving its expectations and protective functions. *El celoso extremeño* stands as an example of how literature can explore the boundaries of sound, reminding us that borders are never secure, and that noise and music are tools for enchantment and disruption.

CONCLUSION

Sonic Snapshots of Literature

Sound not only plays an important role in our approach to and appreciation of literature, it also holds the power to unlock secrets about the past. On September 14, 2015, at 5:51 a.m. EDT, the presence of gravitational waves, as predicted almost exactly a century earlier by Albert Einstein, was recorded for the first time in history. Two research centers in Louisiana and Washington, collaborating cross-country, detected an auditory disturbance in their feedback. This minute, audible blip in the data was revealed to be the collision of two massive black holes that had circled each other and eventually collided, sending out an enormous amount of energy in the form of gravitational waves. These waves, rippling through the universe, arrived at Earth more than a billion years later as traces of its origins.

Sight, as Hans Jonas notes, is a simultaneous process, rooted in the present, whereas sound is a dynamic "time object", forever fleeting. He writes, "Sound exists in sequence, every *now* of it vanishing into the past while it goes on: to arrest this flow and 'view' a momentary 'slice' of it would mean to not have a snapshot but an atomic fragment of it, and strictly speaking nothing at all" (144, emphasis in original). Jonas' point, while duly noted, falls short in the case of the deduction of gravitational waves. The sonic blip recorded, this "slice", "atomic fragment", interestingly, is precisely that which Jonas says it cannot be: a snapshot of the universe. Although literature is a mute art form, fortunately, literary representations of sound do not vanish into the past. Literature in its written form is filled

with sonic snapshots, the reader holding the power to envision how these auditory features may have been intended or imagined by the author.

In this dissertation, I sought to listen to the literary soundscapes of the works of Fray Luis de León and Miguel de Cervantes. My three chapters have demonstrated how noise and sound add to the construction of complex characters and scenes. I situated my analyses within broader theoretical frameworks such as contemporary theories of noise, theory of acousmatic and Gothic sound(s), Jacques Attali's theory of noise, and Ted Gioia's history of subversive music. Across the three chapters, the dissertation has shown how sound and noise are used to stage a range of experiences and dynamics: in Fray Luis, a contrast between *mundanal ruido* and (transcendent) harmony; in *Don Quijote*, noise as a liminal, destabilizing force that unsettles perception; and in *El celoso extremeño*, an arc of sonic disruption that begins with suppression and ends in silence, exposing the fragility of authority and the subversive power of music.

In Chapter 1, I explored how Fray Luis de León engages with noise as both a literal sonic phenomenon and a profound metaphor for worldly distraction. Through a comparative analysis of "Oda a la vida retirada" and "Oda a Francisco de Salinas," this chapter has demonstrated two distinct, yet interconnected, paths of self-transformation through acoustic movement. In "Vida retirada," Fray Luis articulates a horizontal retreat away from what he calls *mundanal ruido*. This noise is not merely urban clamor but a figure of spiritual disorder, encompassing elements such as pride, vanity, material possessions, flattery, confusion, and *Fama*. Fray Luis actively rejects these disruptive sounds and the existential agitation they cause, instead seeking the hi-fi soundscape of the countryside—

characterized by babbling brooks, birdsong, and the gentle rustling of trees—as a source of calm and spiritual recomposure. This withdrawal is presented not as a mere aspiration but as a state already attained, initiating a moral and spiritual transformation and serving as an invitation for the reader to pursue a similar *descansada vida*. Conversely, "A Francisco de Salinas" stages a vertical ascent, where music acts as a powerful engine of transcendence, propelling the soul toward the "más alta esfera". Here, music creates a poetic atmosphere of calm and metaphysical clarity, a stark contrast to the turbulent "viento" associated with worldly distraction in "Vida retirada". This ode emphasizes music's role in cosmic harmony and its unique capacity to elevate the soul to divine proximity. Ultimately, both poems underscore how the rejection of noise and the attunement to harmonious sound—whether the natural music of retreat or the divine music of transcendence—are fundamental architects of self.

The second chapter turned to Cervantes, where noise emerges as a disturbing yet inspirational force. I began by drawing on Hans Jonas' definition of sound as a temporal, unstable "time-object" and Mladen Dolar's theory of the vulnerability of the listener. As we have no "earlids", sound imposes itself, and when it is overwhelming, uncomfortable, or ambiguous, it generates fear and disorientation. In this chapter, Cervantes dramatizes what I have traced as a "dual nature" of fear and wonder in the face of nocturnal and acousmatic sounds. The unknown pounding of the *batanes* mixes with the sounds of water and wind in the trees to create an ambiguous "compound noise". Sancho embodies Dolar's concept of vulnerability, while for Quijote, the unseen noise fuels his imagination. A close reading of Cervantes' sound-related vocabulary reveals distinctions between particular terms and their connection to noise. In one paragraph, he distinguishes *ruido*, the welcomed sound of

water, from *estruendo*, used to describe the mysterious noise of the *batanes*. At the same time, *estruendo* may connote spectacle or fame, pushing noise into the symbolic realm. Alongside these terms, Cervantes adds in "sordo y confuso estruendo de los árboles", comically contrasted with Sancho's bodily noises, described as "bien diferente de aquel que a él le ponía tanto miedo" (I, 20: 236). The episode dramatizes noise as a liminal force; by severing sound from its visible source, Cervantes suspends his characters (and readers) in uncertainty, where fear and curiosity intertwine.

Chapter 3 focused on *El celoso extremeño* and the "auditory arc" that moves from suppression to seduction, ecstasy, and silence. I began the theoretical section of this chapter with a discussion of John Cage's 4′33″, which led into an exploration of Jacques Attali's theory of noise and music as subversive forces. Ted Gioia underscores this by tracing music's origins in disruptive, even violent sounds. These perspectives foreground the dual and subversive nature of noise and music: they can serve as instruments of authority and repression, but they also carry the power to destabilize and transform. In this *novela ejemplar*, Loaysa's music embodies this subversive potential. His singing and performance penetrate and destabilize Carrizales' hegemonic fortress. For Carrizales, music registers only as disruptive noise, undermining his authority through the seduction of Luis and Loaysa's covert entrance into the house. In this chapter, I argued that *El celoso extremeño* dramatizes the subversive capacity of sound to dissolve boundaries of authority, destabilize social order, and reconfigure power relations.

More broadly, I traced and followed several through-lines in these three chapters. In "Oda a Salines", *aire* represents a purified medium of harmony and transcendence. The

term is aligned with clarity, serenity, and divine ascent, standing in opposition to *viento* in "Vida retirada", which conveys turbulence, confusion, and the noisy instability of worldly life. By contrast, in *El celoso extremeño*, Loaysa dismisses the few songs that Luis knows as "aire," reducing them to trivial noise, potentially positioned as the opposite of music. Another sort of wind, the sound of the breeze in the trees, is used in starkly different ways by Fray Luis and Cervantes. In *"*El episodio de los batanes,*"* Cervantes uses the same phrase—"manso ruido"—that recalls the sounds of "Vida retirada". By importing this language into a comic setting and throwing in the adjective "temeroso", Cervantes sets up an ironic reversal, where peaceful sounds provoke panic instead of tranquility.

Additionally, both Fray Luis and Cervantes treat the concept of fame as one that is noisy and potentially dangerous. Hillel Schwartz reminds us of this dynamic in his assertation that fame is "the 'noise' a person made in the world, for better or worse" (46). In Fray Luis, a personified *Fama* sings "con voz pregonera," a noisy proclamation that distracts and tempts. In *Don Quijote*, noise becomes an opportunity for renown: Quijote interprets the acousmatic sound of the *batanes* not as meaningless racket but as the promise of glory. Yet Cervantes also highlights the negative side of fame, or the inherent risk of distortion. When Sancho insists on (re)telling their story, Quijote says that "no es digna de contarse, que no son todas las personas tan discretas, que sepan poner en su punto las cosas" (I, 20: 240–241). Thus, storytelling itself might be understood as a form of noise: an auditory force that escapes control and spreads unpredictably. Taken together, these examples show how fame is figured as noise: captivating and tempting, while equally unruly and unstable.

Another theme seen in these texts are the characters' embodied reactions to noise. In *Don Quijote*, Sancho's audible cries, sighs, and digestive noises exhibit his fear. In *El celoso extremeño*, Luis' bodily response to Loaysa's music— "estaba colgado de la música del virote, y diera un brazo por poder abrir la puerta y escucharle más a su placer"—shows music's intoxicating nature. The *novela* closes with instances of somatic silence, such as the description of Leonora being so affected that "*la turbación le ató la lengua*". Even in Fray Luis' poetry, though less explicitly corporeal, noise is related to the term *grave*—heavy, weighing upon the self—contrasted with the lightness of harmony that lifts the soul.

Beyond the instances of silence at the end of *El celoso extremeño,* this dissertation has illuminated silence not as a mere void, but as an active and influential force. In Fray Luis de León's poetry, silence functions as a philosophical and spiritual retreat from "mundanal ruido," where the speaker seeks stillness, clarity, and the moral harmony found in nature, aspiring to live "a solas, sin testigo" to escape social scrutiny. In *Don Quijote*, silence takes on an uncanny and liminal quality in "El episodio de los batanes," where Don Quijote's perception of "estraño silencio" amplifies unease and the expectation of adventure. This contrasts with the later idealization of "el maravilloso silencio" as a marker of loyalty, or Sancho's compelled silence stemming from fear. Finally, in *El celoso extremeño*, silence is a central tool of control and subversion. Carrizales establishes a fortress of sensory deprivation, where the imposed silence is so severe that the women remark "ni aun el canto de los pájaros habemos oído." However, the enslaved women do not remain complicit, and pledge, "Callaremos más que si fuésemo mudas" to facilitate Loaysa's infiltration. Paradoxically, Carrizales's loud *ronquidos* become a sonic shield—

"música, a los oídos de su esposa"—providing reassurance, while the observation that "todo estaba sepultado en silencio" also signals to the conspirators that he remains asleep.

The findings of this dissertation open several avenues for further inquiry. First and foremost, there are many instances and characters that could be examined through the lens of voice theory. For example, Paul Zumthor's distinction between orality (semantic content) and vocality (tone, timbre, rhythm) in *Oral Poetry: An Introduction,* or Adriana Cavarero's *For More than One Voice: Toward a Philosophy of Vocal Expression* offer interesting theories of voice to follow. For example, Cervantes' *El casamiento engañoso* opens a door for insights into voice as seduction, as seen in Doña Estefania's power to "enamorar comunicada." Future work could explore how voice functions as a medium of desire or domination.

Ted Gioia's theory of music, particularly his insights into music's biological and social effects—such as fostering group cohesion and trust through oxytocin release—set it apart as a potent social and political tool. This is explicitly linked to music's capacity to generate group cohesion for both creative and destructive purposes. Further research could delve deeper into the literary representation of music not just as an aesthetic expression, but as a covert biological or social engineering tool. This could explore how characters consciously or unconsciously use music to manipulate emotions, build friendships or allegiances, or exert control within narratives, moving beyond its explicit narrative function to its implicit psychological impact.

Though sound itself is always fleeting, literature can serve to preserve what otherwise would be lost to silence. In my readings of Fray Luis de León and Miguel de

Cervantes, I have shown that noise is never just a background element: it unsettles, sparks imagination, seduces, and subverts. From the ethical retreat away from *mundanal ruido*, to the destabilizing acousmatic sound of the *batanes*, to the rebellious music that dissolves the boundaries of Carrizales' *fortaleza*, these texts remind us that acoustic disturbances shape not only the lives of characters but the very forms of narrative and poetry. By listening closely, we can hear—rather, imagine—how early modern writers grappled with the disruptive and generative potential of noise and sound. These echoes endure in literary works, carrying with them the cultural questions and possibilities of the past into the present. My hope is that this dissertation has tuned in to these reverberations: faint yet enduring signals, reminding us that literature is an acoustic archive, always humming.

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